The First Canadians in France

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F. McKELVEY BELL

"HE IS A MAN AFTER MY OWN HEART!" EXCLAIMED MADAME COUILLARD

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THE FIRST CANADIANS IN FRANCE

THE CHRONICLE OF A MILITARY HOSPITAL IN THE WAR ZONE

BY

F. McKELVEY BELL

ILLUSTRATED BY
CHRISTOPHER FULLEYLOVE

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TO

SURGEON-GENERAL GUY CARLETON JONES, C.M.G.

AND TO

THE CANADIAN MEDICAL SERVICES OVERSEAS

THESE PAGES ARE DEDICATED

The wise and skillful guidance of the former and the efficient fulfilment of onerous duties by all have given to the Canadian Medical Service a status second to none in the Empire: The sick and wounded soldier has been made to feel that a Military Hospital may be not only a highly scientific institution—but a Home.

PREFACE

In glancing through these pages, now that they are written, I realise that insufficient stress has been laid upon the heroism and self-sacrifice of the non-commissioned officers and men of the Army Medical Corps—the boys who, in the dull monotony of hospital life, denied the exhilaration and stimulus of the firing line, are, alas, too often forgotten. All honour to them that in spite of this handicap they give of their best, and give it whole-heartedly to their stricken comrades.

The pill of fact herein is but thinly coated with the sugar of fiction, but if the reader can get a picture, however indefinite, of military hospital life in France, these pages will not have been written altogether in vain.

F. McK. B.

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THE FIRST CANADIANS IN FRANCE

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CHAPTER I

We were a heterogeneous lot—no one could deny that—all the way down from big Bill Barker, the heavyweight hostler, to little Huxford, the featherweight hustler.

No commanding officer, while sober, would have chosen us *en masse*. But we weren't chosen—we just arrived, piece by piece; and the Hammer of Time, with many a nasty knock, has welded us.

One by one, from the farthest corners of the Dominion, the magic magnet of the war drew us to the plains of Valcartier, and one by one it dropped us side by side. Why some came or why they are still here God knows! Man may merely conjecture.

Divers forces helped to speed us from our homes: love of adventure, loss of a sweetheart, family quarrels, the wander-spirit, and, among

many other sentiments—patriotism. But only one force held us together: our Colonel! Without him, as an entity, we ceased to exist. His broad-minded generosity and liberal forbearance closed many an angry breach. His love of us finds its analogy only in the love of a father for his prodigal son.

Long after we reached France, when the dull monotony of daily routine had somewhat sobered us, one early morning the sweet but disturbing note of the bugle sounding the *reveille* brought me back from dreams of home. I lay drowsily listening to its insistent voice. The door of my room opened softly, and the orderly stole in.

He was a red-cheeked, full-lipped country lad, scarce seventeen years of age. He knelt down before the fireplace and meditatively raked the ashes from its recess. He was a slow lad; slow in speech, slower in action, and his big dreamy blue eyes belied his military bearing.

I turned over in bed to get a better view of him.

"What freak of fancy brought you so far from home, Wilson?" I queried.

"Dunno, zur," he drawled. "Not much fun hustlin' coals in the mornin' nur pullin' teeth in the afternoon." For Wilson, among his multitudinous duties, was dental orderly too.

"There's such an air of farm and field about you, Wilson, that sometimes, at short range, I imagine I get a whiff of new-mown hay."

He sat up on his haunches, balancing the shovel upon his outstretched hand. The pool of memory was stirred. A hazy thought was struggling to the surface. He looked dreamily toward me for a moment before he replied.

"I wuz born an' raised in the country, zur," he said. "When the war broke out I wuz pickin' apples on dad's farm. I didn't like my job. Gee! I wish't I'd stayed an' picked 'em now."

How we ever taught Wilson to say "Sir," or even his corruption of the word, must remain forever shrouded in mystery; but it was accomplished at last, just like many other great works of art.

The Canadian spirit of democracy resents any semblance of a confession of inferiority, and the sergeant-major's troubles were like unto those of Job. Military discipline commenced in earnest when the ship left the har-

bour at Quebec, and has hung over us like a brooding robin ever since.

It was an eventful morning to us (and to England) when our fleet of thirty ocean liners, with its freight of thirty-three thousand soldiers, steamed slowly into the harbour at Plymouth and dropped anchor.

For two glorious October weeks we had bedecked the Atlantic. His Majesty's fleet night and day had guarded us with an ever-increasing care. I can still look over the starboard rail and see the black smoke of the *Gloria* prowling along in the south, and, afar off in the north, the *Queen Mary* watching our hazardous course. The jaunty little *Charybdis* minced perkily ahead.

There were other battleships, too, which picked us up from time to time; and the *Monmouth,* on the last voyage she was destined to make, steamed through our lines one day. The brave fellows, who were so soon to meet a watery grave, lined up upon her deck, giving us three resounding cheers as she passed by, and we echoed them with a will.

Captain Reggy, our dapper mess secretary,

was pacing the hurricane deck one day. From time to time his gaze turned wistfully across the waves to the other two lines of ships steaming peacefully along side by side. Something weighty was on his mind. Occasionally he glanced up to the military signalling officer on the bridge, and with inexplicable interest watched his movements with the flags.

"I say," Reggy called up to him, "can you get a message across to the *Franconia?*"

"She's third ship in the third line—a little difficult, I should say," the signaller replied.

"But it *can* be done, can't it?" Reggy coaxed.

"Yes, if it's very important."

"It's most important. I want to send a message to one of the nurses."

The signalling lieutenant leaned both elbows upon the rail and looked down in grinning amazement upon his intrepid interlocutor.

"What the d——l! I say, you're the sort of man we need at the front—one with plenty of nerve!"

"Be a sport and send it over!" Reggy coaxed.

"All right—I'll take a chance."

"Ask for Nursing Sister Marlow. Give her Captain Reggy's compliments and best wishes, and will she join him on board for dinner this evening, seven o'clock!"

There was a flutter of flags for several seconds, while the ridiculous message passed across from ship to ship. Reggy waited anxiously for a reply.

In less than ten minutes from across the deep came this very lucid answer: "Nursing Sister Marlow's compliments to Captain Reggy. Regrets must decline kind invitation to dinner. *Mal de mer* has rendered her *hors de combat.* Many thanks."

On the last day of our journey the speedy torpedo boat destroyers rushed out to meet us and whirled round and round us hour by hour as we entered the English Channel. Soon the welcome shores of England loomed through the haze, and the sight sent a thrill through all our hearts.

We had scarce dropped anchor when, from the training ship close by, a yawl pulled

quickly toward us, "manned" by a dozen or more lads from a training ship. They rowed with the quick neat stroke of trained athletes, and as the boat came alongside ours they shipped their oars and raised their boyish voices in a welcoming cheer. We leaned over the side of our ship and returned their greeting with a stentorian heartiness that startled the sleeping town.

Showers of small coin and cigarettes were dropped into their boat, and the way in which they fought for position, scrambling over or under one another, upsetting this one or knocking down that, showed that these lads were quite capable of upholding all the old fighting traditions of the British Navy.

A tug-boat soon steamed alongside, too, and down the accommodation-ladder scrambled those of us who were lucky enough to have permission to go ashore.

"Come along, Reggy," I shouted. But Reggy shook his head sorrowfully, and his handsome face was clouded.

"Just my rotten luck to be orderly officer on a day like this!" he replied. "To-day I guard the ship, but to-morrow—oh, to-

morrow!" Reggy held out both hands in mock appeal to the shore: "Me for the red paint and city lights!"

Progress up the streets of Devonport was slow. Thousands of troops already landed were marching to the time of "The Maple Leaf Forever," and every foot of pavement or sidewalk was packed with struggling but enthusiastic humanity shouting itself hoarse in delirious welcome.

We were on the upper deck of a tramcar, leaning over the throng, and eagerly looking for the faces of friends in the ranks of a passing battalion. They swung along to the music of their band—a clean-cut, well-set-up, manly lot, who marched with the firm independent step of the free born. Suddenly our colonel discovered a familiar face among the khaki-clad below. There is no military precedent for what he did; years of training fell away on the instant. He leaned from the car and shouted:

"Hello, 'Foghorn'! What cheer?"

"Foghorn" looked up. His right arm was somewhat hampered, from a military point of view, by reason of being about the waist

of a pretty girl, who accommodatingly marched along with the battalion in general, and "Foghorn" in particular.

"Hello, Jack," he bellowed in a voice which easily accounted for his nickname. "Lots of cheer. Can't salute. One arm busy! Other is glass arm from saluting the brass hats. See you later. Good luck!"

And thus our cosmopolitan and ultra-democratic battalion passed on.

Some one has said that the Englishman is temperamentally cold. It can't be proved by Devonport or Plymouth. His temperature in both towns registered ninety-eight degrees in the shadiest and most secluded spots. And the women and children! Banish all thought of British frigidity! The Canadians in England never discovered it.

The passion of the Devonport children for souvenirs in the shape of pennies and buttons became so violent in a few hours that our small coin was likely to become extinct and our buttons merely things that used to be. Every time a soldier appeared upon the street he was instantly surrounded

by a bevy of insistent and persistent mendicants.

Once we sought refuge in a cooling spot where glasses tinkle and the beer foams high—and children might not follow there. The pretty barmaid smiled. The second in command twirled his long moustache and fixed the maiden with his martial eye.

"What will you have, sir?" she inquired sweetly.

The senior major was always gallant to a pretty girl. He drew himself up to his full six feet, two, and saluted. A mellow line from "Omar Khayyám" dropped from his thirsty lips:

"A jug of wine, a loaf of bread, and thou
Beside me singing in the wilderness."

How much further he might have gone one cannot say. The girl held up a reproving finger and exclaimed:

"Ah, I see it is black coffee the gentleman requires."

But the major's poetic spirit was aroused. "Avaunt coffee," he cried.

"Shall I distress my ruddy soul
With dusky dregs from coffee urn?
Far sweeter, sweet, to quench its fire
With wine for which the 'innards' yearn.

A glass of beer, please."

The adjutant leaned over toward me and hazarded, in a hoarse whisper:

"I presume they have no ice."

The barmaid's red cheeks dimpled and two straight rows of pearly teeth shone upon him, as she answered for me:

"Your presumption is ill-founded, young man. We have plenty of ice with which to temper the hot young blood of the Canadians."

The adjutant looked helplessly up, bereft of repartee; then apostrophised the ceiling:

"And these are the stupid Englishwomen we have been led to expect!"

Our education was going on apace.

A few moments later we emerged and discovered ourselves in a veritable whirlpool of young monetary gluttons.

"Penny, sir! penny! penny!" they shouted in staccato chorus. Our supply of pennies

had long since been depleted. An idea struck me.

"See here," I said in serious tone. "We're only a lot of poor soldiers going to the war. We can't always be giving away pennies. We need pennies worse than you do."

A sudden hush fell upon the little circle. Some looked abashed, others curiously uncertain, a few sympathetic. The silence lasted a full minute. We all stood still looking at one another.

"Can any little boy or girl in this crowd give a poor soldier a penny to help him along to the war?" I asked quietly.

Again silence. Finally a little ragged tot of about eight years of age, carrying a baby in her arms, turned to her companions and said: "Here, hold the baby for me and I'll give the poor fellow a penny." She dived deep in the pocket of her frock, brought out a penny, ha'penny (her total wealth) and held it out to me.

Lieutenant Moe stepped forward. "Look here, major," he said sternly, "do you mean to say you'll take that money from a youngster?"

"I do," I replied, without a smile.

"I won't permit it," he cried.

Here was an embarrassing situation. I couldn't explain to him without confessing to the child as well. I wished to gauge how much patriotism beat in those little hearts, what sacrifice they were prepared to make for their country; and here was one measuring up to the highest ideals. I daren't either withdraw or explain.

"I must have the pennies, Moe, and I am going to take them," I replied firmly. "Stand aside, please!"

Military discipline came to the rescue. Moe saluted stiffly and stepped back. The little girl gravely handed over the pennies and took back her baby.

"Any others?" I asked.

Some of the children declared they had none; a few looked sheepish and hung their heads. I slipped a sixpence into the hand of the little lady.

"Well, I'll be damned!" exclaimed Moe. "Here's another penny for you," and he handed the bewildered child half a crown.

A shout of surprise and dismay went up

from the other children, who realised too late that they had failed in the test.

"The drinks are certainly on me!" Moe cried. "About turn!"

Sometimes when I feel that the world is sordid and mean I go to my trunk and look at those two coins, and I know that somewhere, in a frail little body, beats a generous heart, and I feel that after all part of the world is worth while.

CHAPTER II

REGGY was on shore at last. He said he felt much better walking alone up street —more as if he owned the town!

It's a strange sensation stepping on solid ground after weeks on shipboard. There is a lack of harmony between oneself and the ground. You rock—the ground stands still; you stand still—the ground rocks, like an angry sergeant.

The senior major was on the corner, holding an animated conversation with a beautifully gowned young lady, to whom he bid a hasty adieu as Reggy hove in sight.

"Corking girl, that," said Reggy mischievously.

"Where?" demanded the major, looking about.

"The young lady to whom you just avoided introducing me."

"It's rather a remarkable coincidence," said

the major, avoiding controversy, "that I should run across a relation in this far-away place!"

"Very!" Reggy replied drily. "Family's fond of travel, I take it."

A tall, well-knit young subaltern elbowed his way through the crowd and joined the pair. Reggy greeted him:

"Better come and have dinner with your brother and me, Tom. I feel he needs good company and a chaperon or two!"

The trio entered the rotunda of the *Royal.* A distinguished looking gentleman and a prepossessing lady of middle age stood chatting together. Their voices were agitated, and the three officers could not avoid overhearing snatches of the conversation.

"He is on the *Cassandra,* and in this medley of ships no one seems to know where his is anchored," the man was saying.

"Dear me," sighed the lady. "To think that our boy should be so near and that we should not be able to see him! It's dreadful!"

"But we must find him," the man declared

reassuringly. "Surely there is some way of reaching the ship?"

"They tell me no one is allowed on board; and when the battalion disembarks they will be marched away. What shall we do?" she cried in great distress.

Reggy's impulsive heart was touched. He approached them and respectfully saluted.

"A thousand pardons, sir," he said, "for breaking in upon a private conversation, but I couldn't help overhearing your words. Can I be of any assistance to you?"

"It is very kind of you, indeed," the man answered in a rich voice of unusual gentility. "Perhaps you can help us. My son is aboard the *Cassandra.* We haven't seen him since he went to Canada four years ago. He is only a Tommy, so cannot come ashore, and it seems impossible to get into communication with him."

"What luck!" Reggy exclaimed. "His ship and ours are anchored side by side; so close, in fact, that we have a connecting gangway."

"Oh, do you think we could get out to

him?" the mother asked anxiously. "We have no permit to visit the ships."

"If you can get authority to enter the dockyards, I'll see what I can do to get you aboard to-morrow noon," Reggy answered. "I'll meet you at the quay."

"God bless you!" exclaimed the lady, with tears in her eyes.

The following day, true to his word, Reggy, with a written permit in his pocket, ushered Mr. and Mrs. Hargreaves aboard the ship.

"You will stay and lunch with me," said Reggy. "I'll get your boy across, and we'll all lunch together."

"But I was under the impression that Tommies were not allowed to dine with officers," protested Mr. Hargreaves.

"The deuce! I'd forgotten all about that," Reggy exclaimed, as he scratched his head perplexedly. "Ah, I have it," he ejaculated a moment later; "he shall be an officer during the meal. I'll lend him a tunic. No one else on board will know."

"But I don't wish you to get yourself into trouble," Mr. Hargreaves remonstrated.

Reggy laughed.

"I love such trouble," he cried, "and the risk fascinates me. I'll be back in a moment." And he dashed off in his impetuous way.

In a short time he returned, bringing with him a handsome but much embarrassed youth, wearing a captain's uniform. But the sight which met his eyes banished all thought of clothes.

"Mother! Father!" he cried; and in a moment was clasped in his mother's arms, while tears of joy she didn't strive to hide rolled down her cheeks. The old gentleman turned his head aside to hide his own emotion, and Reggy, feeling *de trop,* slipped quietly away.

A few days later our ship was dragged slowly into dock by two small but powerful tug-boats. The boys who had been caged on board for a full week in sight of but unable to reach the land shouted and danced for joy. The noise of the donkey engine pulling our equipment out of the hold was to us the sweetest sound on land or sea.

We were almost the last ship to dock, and a thousand boys were impatiently awaiting

their turn to step on English soil. Machine guns, boxes of rifles and ammunition, great cases of food and wagons came hurtling through the hatchway, vomited from the depths below. With great speed and regularity they were deposited on the quay, while heavy motor lorries, piled high with freight, creaked from dock to train.

From across the quay, and in awesome proximity, the great guns of the battle cruisers *Tiger* and *Benbow* yawned at us. As far as one might look heavily armoured men-of-war, ready to sail or in process of construction, met the eye, and the deafening crash of the trip-hammer stormed the ear. Britain may well be proud of her navy. Its size and might are far beyond our ken. Patiently, in peaceful harbour, or on sea, she lies in wait and longs for Germany's inevitable hour.

The hospitality of the citizens of Devonport and Plymouth will long remain a pleasant recollection. First impressions linger and our first impressions there still stir up delightful memories.

"Now, then, look sharp there! Stow them adoos an' get aboard!"

It was the raucous voice of Sergeant Honk which thus assailed his unwilling flock. The boys were bidding a lengthy farewell to the local beauties, who had patriotically followed them to the train.

The sergeant was hot and dusty, and beaded drops of sweat dripped from his unwashed chin. His hat was cocked over one eye, in very unmilitary style. The Tommies, under the stimulating influence of two or more draughts of "bitter" purchased at a nearby bar, were inclined to be jocose.

"'Ave *another* drink, 'Onk!" cried one, thrusting a grimy head from the train window and mimicking Honk's cockney accent. This subtle allusion to previous libations aroused the sergeant's ire.

"Oo said that?" he shouted wrathfully, as he turned quickly about. "Blimey if yer ain't got no more disc'pline than a 'erd uv Alberta steers! If I 'ears any more sauce like that some one 'ull be up for 'office' in th' mornin'!"

The culprit had withdrawn his head in time, and peace prevailed for moment.

"What's that baggage fatigue doin'?" he cried a moment later. "D'ye think y'er at a picnic—eatin' oranges? Load them tents!"

The orange-eating "fatigue," looking very hot and fatigued indeed, fell reluctantly to work.

Sergeant Honk was not beautiful to look upon—his best friends conceded this. His nose was bent and red. He had one fixed and one revolving eye, and when the former had transfixed you, the latter wandered aimlessly about, seeking I know not what. He was so knock-kneed that his feet could never meet. I think it was the sergeant-major in *Punch* who complained that "it was impossible to make him look 'smart,' for when his knees stood at attention his feet would stand at ease."

To see Honk salute with one stiff hand pointing heavenward and his unruly feet ten inches apart has been known to bring a wan sweet smile to the face of blasé generals; but subalterns, more prone to mirth, have sometimes laughed outright.

Some one had thrown a banana peel upon the station platform. Honk stepped backward upon its slippery face. He didn't fall, but his queer legs opened and shut with a scissor-like snap that wrenched his dignity in twain.

"Fruit's the curse of the army," he muttered.

Somehow we got aboard at last—officers, non-commissioned officers and men. The crowd cheered a lusty farewell, and amidst much waving of pocket handkerchiefs and hats, Plymouth faded away, and the second stage of our journey began.

It was midnight when we pulled into Lavington station. There is no village there—merely a tavern of doubtful mien. Rain was falling in a steady drizzle as we emerged upon the platform and stood shivering in the bleak east wind. The transport officer, who had been awaiting our arrival, approached the colonel and saluted.

"Rather a nasty night, sir," he observed courteously.

"Bad night for a march," the colonel re-

plied. "My men are tired, too. Hope we haven't got far to go?"

"Not very, sir; a matter of eight or nine miles only."

The colonel glanced at him sharply, thinking the information was given in satirical vein; but the Englishman's face was inscrutable.

"Nine miles!" he exclaimed. "That may be an easy march for seasoned troops, but my men have been three weeks on shipboard."

"Sorry, sir, but that's the shortest route."

"Thanks; we'll camp right here." The colonel was emphatic.

"In the rain?" the Englishman inquired in some surprise.

"Yes. What of it?"

"Nothing, sir; but it seems unusual, that's all."

"We're unusual people," the colonel answered dryly. "Quartermaster, get out the rubber sheets and blankets. The station platform will be our bed."

The transport officer saluted and retired.

The adjutant was weary and sleepy. He

had vainly tried a stimulating Scotch or two to rouse his lagging spirit.

"Fall in, men," he shouted. " 'Shun! Right dress. Quartermaster, issue the blankets, please."

The quartermaster was disposed to argue the point. The blankets would all be wet and muddy, and damaged with coal cinders; but he was finally overruled.

The adjutant turned to look at the men. Their line had wabbled and showed strange gyrations.

"*Will* you men stand in line?" he cried. "How do any of you ever expect to succeed in life if you can't learn to stand in a straight line?" With which unanswerable argument and much pleased with his midnight philosophy, he relapsed into his customary genial smile.

At last the blankets were distributed, and in an hour the station platform and bridge over the tracks looked like the deck of an emigrant steamer. Wherever the eye reached, the dimly-lighted platform showed rows of sleeping men, rolled up and looking very like sacks of potatoes lying together.

Five of us officers turned into the expressman's hut, and in the dark fell into whatever corner was available. Reggy and I occupied either side of an unlighted stove, and throughout the jumpy watches of the night bruised our shins against its inhospitable legs.

Dawn was breaking, and breaking darkly, too, as the dim shadow of the expressman came stumbling across the platform through rows of growling men. At last he reached his office, and, all unconscious of our presence, stepped within. He stepped upon the sleeping form of the adjutant, and the form emitted a mighty roar. The expressman staggered back in amazement, giving vent to this weird epigram:

"Every bloomin' 'ole a sleepin' 'ole!"

"You'll 'ave to get up," he cried indignantly when he had recovered from his astonishment. "This ain't a bloomin' boardin'-'ouse!"

"Could you return in half an hour?" Reggy queried in drowsy tones, but without opening his eyes.

"No. I couldn't return in 'alf an hour," he mocked peevishly.

"Run away like a good fellow, and bring some shaving water—have it hot!" Reggy commanded.

"Oh, I'll make it 'ot for you all right, if you don't let me into my office," he retorted angrily.

Might is not always right, so we reluctantly rose. We had had three hours of fitful sleep —not too much for our first night's soldiering. Hot coffee, cheese and biscuits were soon served by our cooks, and we prepared for our first march on English sod.

No one who made that march from Lavington to West Down North will ever forget it. Napoleon's march to Moscow was mere child's play compared with it. Reggy said both his corns were shrieking for Blue Jays and when Bill Barker removed his socks (skin and all) it marked an epoch in his life, for both his feet were clean.

Every fifteen minutes it rained. At first we thought this mere playfulness on the part of the weather; but when it kept right on for weeks on end, we knew it to be distem-

per. By day it was a steady drizzle, but at night the weather did its proudest feats. Sometimes it was a cloudburst; anon an ordinary shower that splashed in angry little squirts through the canvas, and fell upon our beds.

And the mud! We stood in mud. We walked in mud. We slept in mud. The sky looked muddy, too. Once, and only once, the moon peeped out—it had splashes of mud on its face!

Reggy loved sleep. It was his one passion. Not the sweet beauty sleep of youth, but the deep snoring slumber of the full-blown man. But, oh, those cruel "Orderly Officer" days, when one must rise at dawn! Reggy thought so, too.

Six a.m. The bugle blew "Parade." Reggy arose. I opened one eye in time to see a bedraggled figure in blue pyjamas stagger across the sloppy floor. His eyes were heavy with sleep, and his wetted forelock fell in a Napoleonic curve. The murky dawn was breaking.

Outside the tent we could hear the sergeant-

major's rubber boots flop, flop, across the muddy road.

"Fall in, men! Fall in!" His tones, diluted with the rain, came filtering through the tent. It was inspection hour.

Reggy fumbled at the flap of the tent, untied the cord, and through the hole thus made thrust his sleep-laden head.

"Parade, 'shun!" shouted the sergeant-major (a sly bit of satire on his part). The warning wasn't needed. The sight of Reggy's dishevelled countenance was enough; Bill Barker himself "shunned." Somewhere from the depths of Reggy's head a sleepy muffled voice emitted this succinct command:

"Serg'nt-major; dish-mish th' parade."

"Right turn! Dis-miss!" With a shout of joy the boys scampered off to their tents.

A moment later Reggy tumbled into bed again, and soon was fast asleep. And within two hours, at breakfast, he was saying, with virtuous resignation: "How I envied you lucky devils sleeping-in this morning! I was up at six o'clock inspecting the parade." And the halo of near-truth hovered gently about his head.

Thus passed three weeks of rain and mud. In spite of ourselves we had begun to look like soldiers. How we ever developed into the finest hospital unit in the forces none of us to this day knows—and none but ourselves suspects it yet. We had, and have still, one outstanding feature—a sort of native modesty. Whatever in this chronicle savours of egotism is merely the love of truth which cannot be suppressed.

And then, one eventful day, the surgeon-general came to inspect us. He seemed pleased with us. Presently he passed into the colonel's tent, and they had a long and secret conference together. Finally the pair emerged again.

"What about your horses?" the general queried.

The horses had been our greatest worry. They came on a different boat, and the two best were missing or stolen. Once Sergeant Honk discovered them in the lines of another unit, but was indiscreet enough to proclaim his belief to the sergeant-major of that unit. When we hurried down to get them they were gone. No one there had ever

heard of a horse of the colour or design which we described. We were discouraged, and in our despair turned to the senior major, who was a great horseman and knew the tricks of the soldier horse-thief.

"Don't get excited," he said reassuringly. "They've only hidden away the horses in a tent, after you chumps recognised them. To-morrow, when they are not suspicious, I'll go down and get them."

And on the morrow *mirabile dictu* he secured them both.

So the colonel answered: "The horses are here, and ready, sir."

Ready for what? There was a tenseness in the air—a sense of mystery that could not be explained. We listened again, but could only catch scraps of the conversation, such as "Transport officer," "Nine a.m." "Don't take the mess tent or any tents but hospital marquees."

Something was brewing and brewing very fast. At length the colonel saluted, and the general left.

"What news, Colonel?" we cried breath-

lessly, as soon as discretion allowed. And he let fall these magic words:

"We are under orders to move. We shall be the first Canadians in France!"

CHAPTER III

It was exactly 10 p.m. as Bill Barker and Huxford, with the heavy team and wagon, drove up to the colonel's tent.

"Do you think you can find your way to Southampton in the dark?" the colonel asked Barker somewhat anxiously.

"Yes, sir. I've never been lost in my life —sober." The afterthought was delivered with a reminiscent grin.

"Remember, no 'booze' until the horses are safely in the town; and a glass of beer will be quite enough even then," the colonel admonished him.

"Never fear, sir," Bill replied, as he saluted. With a last long look at the camp he said: "Good-night, sir," and the horses started down the muddy road.

Why we should still have any affection for that camp in which none of us ever wore a dry stitch of clothes or knew a moment's comfort, is merely another illustration of the

perversity of human nature. Like Bill Sikes' dog, our love is stronger than our common sense. For a moment we stood watching the team pass down through the lines toward the unknown south, and then we turned in to sleep.

At 3 a.m. our camp was all astir, and the dull yellow glow of candles and lanterns shining through the tents dotted the plain. Here and there brighter lights flitted to and fro, as the men proceeded rapidly with the work of packing up.

And what a medley of goods there was! Blankets and rubber sheets were folded neatly into their canvas covers; stoves and pots and pans were crated; boxes of cheese, jam and bully-beef, together with bags of bread were carried out of the tents into the open. At one side stood large boxes of medicines, beds, mattresses, portable folding tables and chairs, and a hundred other varieties of hospital necessaries, all packed and ready for transport.

By 9 a.m. the motor lorries commenced to arrive. How the boys worked that morning! The pile of forty tons of goods which

represented our home, and soon would be the home of many others, sick and wounded, melted away before their united effort.

We had come to Salisbury Plain in the rain; it was but fitting that we should leave in a similar downpour. We did!

The soldier is a strange creature; a migratory animal whose chief delight in life is moving. Put him in one place for months, be it ever so cheery and comfortable—he frets like a restless steed; but give him the rein, permit him to go, he cares not whither—he is happy. It may be from sunshine to shadow; it may be from château to trench; it may be from heaven to hell—he cares not if he but moves, and, moving, he will whistle or sing his delight.

The road was lined with envious Tommies who came to see us start.

"Yer colonel muster had *some* pull with Kitch'ner t' git ye away so soon," said one of the envious to Tim, the colonel's batman.

Tim was quite the most unique of all our motely tribe. He was born in Ireland, educated (or rather remained uneducated) in the Southern States, and for the past ten

years had lived in Canada. He was a faithful servant, true to his master and to all his friends. Like many another "original," he was permitted to take liberties which shocked all sense of military discipline, as well as every other sense; but he amused us and was forgiven. He was a prize fighter, too, of no mean ability, and carried the scars of many a hard-fought battle. No other being in the world used a dialect like Tim's. It was a language all his own, and negroid in character.

"Pull wit' Kitch'ner!" he replied disdainfully. "Wit George hisself, ye means. D'ye s'pose my kernel hobnobs wit' anyt'ing lessen royalty? De king sent fer him, an' he goed to Lunnon a' purpose."

" 'Wot is yer Majesty's command?' sez de kernel.

" 'Kernel,' sez he, 'when I seed yer men on p'rade las' Sunday, I turned to Lord Kitch'ner an' sez: "Kitch'ner, it ain't right t' keep men as good as dat in England; dere place is at de front!" ' "

"You was sure needed there," Tim's vis-à-vis

interjected sarcastically; "good thick-headed fellers t' stop a bullet."

Tim ignored the remark, and continued:

"So he sez, 'Kernel, yer unit 'ull be de first t' leave fer France, an' good luck t' ye!' Wit dat de kernel comed back, an' now we're goin' to see de Pea-jammers."

"Wot's them?" the other growlingly inquired.

"Don't ye know wot Pea-jammers is yet? Ye muster bin eddicated in night school. Pea-jammers is Frenchmen."

By what process of exclusion Tim had arrived at this strange decision with reference to the French, none but himself knew; and he never by any chance alluded to them otherwise.

"All in, men!" shouted the sergeant-major, and each man scrambled to his allotted place.

To look at the rough exterior of our men one would not suppose that music lurked within their breasts—nothing more unlikely seemed probable; and yet, listen to the vibrant harmony of their chorus as they sit upon their bags and boxes! It rolls in melodious waves over the camp, and crowds of soldiers

come running toward the road to listen. Oh, you may be sure they had their good points, those lads of ours—so many good points, too!

The lorries started, and the boys lifted their voices to the strains of "Good-bye, Dolly, I Must Leave You." The little crowd which lined the road on either side raised their caps and gave three cheers in kindly token of farewell. As we looked back upon those stalwart soldier-boys, many a wistful glance was cast toward us, and many a longing eye followed the trail of our caravan.

Night had fallen before our train puffed noisily into the railway sheds at Southampton. How hungry we were! And the sight of the crowded buffet and its odour of steaming coffee gave us a thrill of expectant delight.

There are times in life when it takes so little to please or interest one. In the ornate grandeur of a metropolitan hotel such coffee and cake as we received that night would have called forth a clamour of protest; but in the rough interior of a dockyard shed no palatial surroundings mar the simple pleas-

ures of the soul. What delicious cheese our quartermaster produced out of a mud-covered box, and how splendidly crisp the hard-tack, as we crunched it with hungry teeth! Seated on our bags and boxes, we feasted as none but hungry soldiers can, and the murky coffee turned into nectar as it touched our lips.

Through the big doorway, too, the eye could feast on the towering side of the ship which was so soon to take us to our great adventure, as she lay snuggled against the quay. But as we rested there, another train pulled into the sheds and stopped. The doors were opened from within, and we were surprised to see hundreds of great horses step quietly and solemnly out upon the platform. There was a marvellous dignity about those tall, magnificent animals, with their arched necks and glossy coats. They drew up upon the platform in long rows like soldiers. There was no neighing, no kicking or baulkiness. They seemed to be impressed with the seriousness of the mission upon which they were sent. A little later, as they passed up the ship's gangway, and were marched aboard,

no regiment ever stepped upon the deck with finer show of discipline.

Our saddle horses were already aboard; but what had become of Barker and the team?

"Where's Barker?" the colonel suddenly demanded. No one present knew; but, as if in answer to his question, little Huxford came running down the platform. By the look of distress upon his face we knew something serious had happened.

"What is it, Huxford?" cried the colonel, as Huxford approached.

"Barker's been arrested, sir, by the military police, and the team are in the detention camp, four miles from here," he gasped.

"Drunk, I suppose?" the colonel queried angrily.

"Well, sir, he *had* had a drink or two, but not till after we got to town," Huxford answered reluctantly.

"I might have guessed as much," said the colonel with some bitterness. "It's useless to depend upon a man who drinks. Here, Fraser," he called to Captain Fraser, "take a taxi and make the camp as quickly as pos-

sible. The boat sails in two hours. Don't fail to bring both Barker and the horses—although, Lord knows, Barker would be no great loss."

It was characteristic of the colonel that no matter what scrapes we got into, no matter what trouble or humiliation we caused him, he never forsook us. More than once in the days that were to follow he saved some reckless youth from being taken out at early dawn and shot; not because he did not feel that the punishment was deserved but because his big, kindly heart enwrapped every one of his wayward soldier-boys with a father's love.

An English regiment was embarking upon the same ship with us. The donkey engine was busy again hauling their accoutrement and ours aboard. Great cases swung aloft in monotonous yet wonderful array. Sometimes a wagon was hoisted into the air; again a motor truck was lifted with apparent ease, swayed to and fro for a moment high above our heads, and then descended to the depths below. By midnight the ship was loaded,

but Barker and the team with Huxford and Captain Fraser had not returned.

The transport officer addressed the senior major.

"I'm sorry," he said, "but I can't hold the ship more than ten minutes longer. If your men don't arrive by that time they'll have to remain behind."

The colonel had gone to meet the train on which the nursing sisters were to arrive. They were coming from London to join us, and were to cross upon the same boat. But the colonel returned alone.

He was a tall, well-built, handsome man, and his winning smile was most contagious. It took a great deal to ruffle his genial good nature, and his blue-grey eyes were seldom darkened by a frown, but this was a night of unusual worry.

He called out to Captain Burnham:

"Have your luggage brought ashore, Burnham. You and I will remain behind to chaperon the nurses. They can't possibly make the boat."

"What's the trouble, sir?" Burnham in-

quired, as he descended upon the quay. "Was their train late?"

The colonel laughed a trifle impatiently. "No; the train was quite on time, but I have been having a new experience. I underestimated the baggage of thirty-five women, that's all. It's astounding! I don't know how many trunks each nurse has, but the *tout ensemble* makes Barnum's circus train look foolish. I ventured to remark that we were only going to the war, not touring Europe, but this precipitated such a shower of reproach upon my innocent head that I made no further protest. I was never able to oust one woman in an argument. Imagine, then, where I stood with thirty-five! The trunks, every one of them, will cross with us to-morrow, and if they wish to bring Peter Robinson's whole shop, you won't hear a murmur from me!"

At this moment the sound of horses' hoofs coming at the gallop broke upon our ears; and Captain Fraser, himself driving the team, with Barker and Huxford clinging to the seat for support, dashed upon the quay. As

the horses pulled up, Barker descended and stood sheepishly awaiting the inevitable.

"Barker, I'm ashamed of you," the colonel said in a tone of stern reproach. "You have been the first to bring disgrace upon our unit, and I hope you will be the last. In future Huxford will have charge of the team. I shall have something further to say when we reach France. Get aboard!"

Barker dropped his eyes during this speech.

"I'm sorry, sir, I—I didn't mean to disgrace you, sir!" With these words he saluted and shuffled humbly and contritely aboard.

It was many a long day before Barker tasted liquor again. The colonel's words burned with a dull glow in his heart, and kindled a spark of manhood there.

Crossing the Channel in those days was not as comparatively safe as it is to-day. Under the water, always prowling about, lurked the German submarines. Every day reports of their dastardly deeds came to hand. Being torpedoed was not the sort of end which one might wish. There was no honour or glory in such a death, and besides, the water looked dreary and cold. In spite of

oneself the thought of being blown suddenly into the air recurred occasionally to mind. It was not that we had any real fear, for any form of death was part of the game of hazard on which we had embarked. But we stood for some time upon the deck and peered inquisitively into the darkness as we steamed rapidly out into the Channel.

What was the dull glow at some distance ahead? Perhaps a ship—it was impossible to say. We looked astern, and there in the darkness we could just discern a ghostly shape which followed in our wake, and, hour by hour, ahead or behind, these two mysterious phantoms followed or led our every turn.

Dawn was breaking; the hazy shapes became more real. Slowly the daylight pierced the mist, and there revealed to our astonished gaze, were two sturdy little torpedo boat destroyers. It was a part of that marvellous British navy which never sleeps by night or day.

What a sense of security those two destroyers gave us! The mist closed round us again, and hid them from our view, but

ever and anon the roar of our siren broke the silence and presently, close by, a sharp answering blast told us that our guardians were near. By and by the fog closed round about us so densely that further progress was unsafe, and so the engines were stopped, and for another day and night we remained at sea.

CHAPTER IV

DURING the day and a half that we stood out in the Channel fog, wondering whether we should ever reach land, or whether a stray German submarine would send us to a higher sphere, we had plenty of time to look about the ship. She was an India liner which had been pressed into service as a troop ship; and the Hindu stewards looked after our many wants as only the Oriental can.

What a far-reaching cosmopolitanism emanates from that little land of Britain! Here were English officers giving orders to the Hindus in their own mysterious tongue; and the deference with which these men obeyed helped us to realise Britain's greatness. To conquer a country, tame it, civilise it—sometimes by force—and still retain the love and respect of its inhabitants, is a power given to but few peoples; yet Britons possess it to the full.

On Sunday morning—a bright warm day in early November—our ship steamed slowly into the port of Le Havre. We lingered a few minutes near a high stone quay. Close beside us was a Belgian hospital ship, its white and green paint and big red crosses contrasting strangely with our own dull grey. We could see the nurses and medical officers on board ministering to their patients with tender care and solicitude.

We were steaming slowly through a narrow channel between block after block of wharves, where ships unnumbered piled their ocean freight. Finally we emerged into a great basin filled with craft, both large and small, some of which were dismantled. Across the bay a splendid ocean liner reared her four smokeless funnels toward the sky; she was one of that great fleet of passenger ships, so recently the pride of France, now thrust aside by the stern demands of ruthless war.

At length we docked, and as we stood leaning over the rail, some little children came running down the quay to greet us.

"Messieurs! Messieurs! Bon jour!" they

cried; and then for the first time we realised that we were in a foreign land.

France, la belle France! How often have we dreamed of you in better days! Bright, vivacious France, whose wit and laughter sparkled like champagne, whose joy was ever rampant! How soon your smiles and tears were to intermingle with our own!

But the soldiers on board had not yet learned to speak in French, and they responded in our own dull tongue: "Good-day, little girls. Hello, little boys," and they dropped silver coins and pennies on the quay.

The French children had already learned a word or two of English, and they had also discovered that the Tommy understood two very useful French words. Not to be outdone in courtesy, they flung them up to us in piping chorus: "Good-night, cigarette, souvenir!"

How many thousand times we have since heard this same greeting! It has become the children's formula, and as a gracious concession to our ignorance of French has met its just reward—in pennies.

Dusk fell before we had completed the un-

loading of our equipment and had it all stowed away in the *hangar*. Then we formed up and, with a French boy-scout as guide, started our march toward camp.

The senior major, on his splendid black horse, led the van; the men, contrary to military custom, carrying a Union Jack, followed, and Captain Reggy and I, mounted, brought up the rear.

The first half-mile of our march was uneventful, as there were few people in the streets of the *basse ville;* but as we passed farther up into the city the sidewalks became crowded with spectators. At first the French mistook us for English soldiers on the march, the sight of whom, while an almost hourly occurrence, was still a matter of keen interest. But as the crowd, becoming larger and larger, and pushing one another off the sidewalks into the road, caught a glimpse of our shoulder badges marked "Canada," the word was passed from mouth to mouth with lightning-like rapidity, and the excitement became intense.

They broke forth into the wildest cheering and shouted again and again, *"Les Ca-*

nadiens! Vive le Canada!" until the clamour was deafening. Men, women and children surrounded us in thousands, laughing, singing and talking, shaking the soldiers by the hand, embracing and even kissing them in the excess of their welcome.

That the boys weren't always kissed on account of their irresistible beauty may be gathered from this little conversation which took place *en passant:*

"Mon Dieu!" exclaimed one of the girls to her nearest neighbour, "why did you kiss that ugly face?"

"Because," was the reply, "he looked so lonely—he seemed to need it most."

They marched up the street with us, arm in arm, all who could get near enough, and threw a thousand questions at us in one unintelligible clatter of French. It was a welcome to stir the blood of the coldest, and from that moment we took France to our hearts, as she had taken us, and held her fast.

What did the landing of a mere handful of Canadians mean to France? There weren't enough of us to be of much importance, compared with the thousands of other British

troops which landed daily. But the French, with their keen sense of appreciation, recognised at once that the advent of this little Canadian band had a broad significance; it meant that in her great struggle for the cause of liberty and humanity France was to be supported not only by Britain but by the far-flung elements of the Empire. It meant encouragement; it meant success!

And as they shouted *"Vive le Canada,"* we echoed with a will, *"Vive la France."* We sang, too, "God Save the King," and *"La Marseillaise."* A few who knew English joined in the first, but *"La Marseillaise,"* starting by courtesy with us, swelled in a moment into a mighty anthem which swept the city like a storm. Later, when we followed with "The Maple Leaf," a respectful silence fell upon the throng. With quick intuition they knew it was a song of home, with which they sympathised, but which they could not understand. And as the melody concluded we could hear them whispering one to another: *"Quelle est cette chanson?"* And we answered in our broken French, "It is a song of our native land, far, far from here."

It was my good fortune during this strange march to ride upon the side close to the curb, while Reggy, in comparative obscurity, rode opposite. Frequently, too, it was my privilege to return the greetings of the dainty French girls who lined the walk and waved their handkerchiefs high above the heads of the crowd in the road.

At last Reggy, trotting along in the shadow, could contain himself no longer. He burst out:

"Hang it all, major! Just my bally luck again; you're always closer to the girls than I."

"But not closer to their hearts, Reggy dear," I interjected soothingly.

"Small consolation, that, in the present situation," Reggy was grumbling, when he was suddenly interrupted by a pretty black-eyed girl who, running alongside his horse, caught him by the hand and forthwith begged a kiss. I believe—or, rather, I hope—Reggy blushed. I should always like to think that at that precise moment Reggy's sense of modesty came to his rescue. If it did, however, it vanished again with alarming rapidity.

"Here's an embarrassing situation," he cried dolefully.

"Very trying, indeed, to have a pretty girl demand a kiss," I laughed.

"Confound it!" he returned. "That's not the trouble; but I'm not horseman enough to lean over and get it."

There, you see, Reggy in one fell moment had destroyed all my illusions about him. Here was I worrying over his distress and presumed embarrassment, while he, hopeless young scamp that he was, showed actual regret because he couldn't fall from grace.

"I would suggest that you dismount," I answered, in a spirit of sarcasm.

For a moment I believe this insane thought obsessed him, and then his latent sense of military discipline and dignity saved him. He turned regretfully to the young lady, and pressing her hand warmly—very warmly, I thought—broke forth in schoolboy French:

"Merci, cherie! Mille fois, mille fois. Another time will have to do."

"Est-ce-que vous parlez Français, monsieur?" she demanded sweetly.

"Rather rough on your French, Reggy,"

I teased, asking you, after that brilliant sortie, if you really speak the language."

Reggy appeared hurt.

"Look at you," he cried, "riding along like a bloated monarch, scooping in the obeisance of the whole kingdom, and because I command the attention—and, I trust, respect—of only one of your subjects, you're jealous. Out upon you—for shame!"

All good things come to an end at last. For half an hour we had been princes or kings, drinking in the nectar of adulation in mighty gulps. It turned our heads and made us dizzy, and this feeling of elation lasted long after we had left the crowd behind, and the faint cry of *Vive les Canadiens* followed us into the darker streets. We toiled slowly over the cobble stones, up the steep hill, and finally into camp.

The camp commandant came to meet us a few minutes after we arrived. He was a fine-looking specimen of British officer—tall, athletic, with iron-grey hair and keen blue eyes. He smiled as he greeted us.

"Good evening, gentlemen," he said, as

the senior major approached and saluted. "Where have you all come from?"

"Originally from Canada, sir," the major replied, "but recently from Salisbury Plains."

"How interesting," he cried in a tone of delighted surprise. "I had no idea the Canadians were coming to France so soon."

"Weren't you expecting us, sir?" the major ventured.

The commandant laughed good-humouredly. We seemed to amuse him.

"Well, not exactly," he replied; "but you are quite welcome. Take those three rows of tents, draw your rations and make yourselves at home. One of these days orders will come along for you."

One of these days! Well, well! Was he actually addressing us in that careless and flippant manner, we who had just taken France by storm? Alas! we were not so important after all. For a full hour we had looked upon ourselves as the whole war, and the rest of the British army as a mere background to our glory. And now we were told that "one of these days!" It was really too bad. But still, he was kindly and courteous,

and behind those smiling eyes lurked a great sympathy, I am sure, for our little band.

We looked about us and then we understood. There were miles of tents. Regiments of soldiers were marching in and regiments were marching out—the Highland "kilties" with their sporrans swaying to and fro in stirring unison. We heaved a sigh. It was all too true. We were only one small cog in the great machine!

But the senior major was elated with a strange and inexplicable emotion. After the commandant had bidden us good-night, he paced back and forth, with his hands behind his back and his head in the air. He raised his feet high as he walked, and clicked his spurs with the firmness of his tread. Something was effervescing in his mind, and soon would blow his mental cork out. What was it? He twirled his moustaches from time to time and smiled a crafty smile. At last it popped:

"Gentlemen," he said, "that's one thing which no one can ever take from me!"

"What?" we cried breathlessly.

"That *I* was the first officer who ever led a Canadian unit into France!"

Oh, the supreme egotism and self-love of old bachelorhood! We turned away without a word, in time to hear little Huxford's piping voice in ungrammatical query.

"Did ye had a good time to-night, Bill?"

And Bill's reply echoed the sentiments of all our hearts.

"Did I?" he cried exultantly. "*Some* class!"

CHAPTER V

How it stormed that night! Thunder, lightning, rain and wind combined in one uproarious elemental war. It seemed as if no tent on earth could stand the strain. Once I peeped outside, and in the flashes saw vistas of tents rolling like great white-crested waves on an operatic sea. From time to time the cracking of poles and the dull swish of canvas, blending with the smothered oaths of men beneath, told us that some tent had fallen.

Reggy slept as peacefully as a new-born babe. Tucked into his canvas sleeping-bag and with a woollen toque pulled well down over his ears, he was oblivious to the storm, and in the faint glimmer of our candle-lantern looked like an Eskimo at rest.

Peg after peg jerked out of the ground, and our tent commenced to rock to and fro in a drunken frenzy. Would the guard never come to tighten the guys? They seemed to

have forgotten us. Warmly ensconced in my blankets and half asleep in spite of the noise, I lay and from time to time idly wondered how much longer the tent would stand.

Sometimes I dozed and dreamed of getting up to fix it, and saw myself crawling about in wet pyjamas in the wind and rain. The thought awoke me; the tent was flapping still. Reggy, as the junior, was in duty bound to right it; but if the storm couldn't wake him, what could mere man do? I dozed again and awoke just in time to see the canvas give one last wild gyration. Then it crashed down upon us.

"Hi! What the d——l are you doing now?"

It was the sleep-saturated voice of Reggy in angry, smothered tones beneath the wreck. For answer to his question, a gust of wind lifted the canvas from his face, and a spurt of rain, with the force of a garden hose, struck him.

"O Lord!" he howled. "The bally tent's blown down!" Reggy's perspicacity, while sluggish, was accurate.

"Get up, you lazy blighter, and lend a

hand!" I shouted between blasts of wind and rain which soaked me through and through.

"Ugh! You wouldn't ask a chap to get up in a storm like this," he cried appealingly.

I didn't. I merely took the lower end of his sleeping-bag and emptied it, as one would a sack of potatoes, onto the floor. Reggy emerged like a rumpled blue-bird.

"Rotten trick, I call that," he grumbled, as he scrambled to his feet.

Luckily by this time the guard arrived to help us, and after a long tussle with the ropes, the tent was pitched once more, and we crawled back to bed.

The morning sun rose clear and bright and smiled as if it had no memories of the night before. Wherever one might look tents lay in heaps upon the ground, but not a breath of wind stirred the fresh cool air. Fainter and more faint from the distance came the weird strain of the bagpipes—a Highland regiment was passing down the hill, starting on that long journey whence all might not return.

Our men had breakfasted and were already

at work raising the fallen tents. The adjutant emerged from his abode wearing a weary smile—he hadn't slept much.

" 'What of the night?' " he cried. "The storm has given me an appetite. Where's breakfast? I'm as hungry as an R.M.C. cadet."

Where indeed was breakfast? As yet we had no "mess"; our goods were still unpacked.

"There's a soldiers' buffet managed by ladies in the cottage yonder," said Fraser, pointing to a brick house on the crest of the hill. Trust Fraser to know where grub abounds! "Perhaps I can persuade the little lady of the place . . ."

"You'll need help," Reggy interpolated hastily. "Some one with persuasive powers. I'll go along."

Reggy's eagerness to go suggested other distractions than foraging. We said we would accompany him—lest he forget. We entered a long room at the rear of the house, which had been a carpenter's shop before the war. It was furnished with two long tables, benches, and a large number of kitchen chairs. The

carpenter's tools hung unused upon the wall. At the farther end of the room several young women and one of maturer years were rapidly cutting up bread and meat for sandwiches, buttering appetising French rolls and placing them all in large baskets. It looked enough to feed a multitude.

We approached the table. One young woman looked up, apparently more from courtesy than with any special interest in our arrival, and said: "Good morning!"

It was true then; they *were* Englishwomen. They were as cool—and refreshing—as the air outside. Reggy saluted gravely.

"May we have something to eat, please?" he inquired hesitatingly.

The young woman looked up again, with a surprised smile. "But you are not Tommies," she replied.

"No; merely officers, and very hungry ones at that."

She looked a trifle perplexed. "We don't serve officers here," she asserted. "You see, this buffet is meant for Tommies only."

Bless their hearts! Here at least was one place where the officer was discounted, and

Tommy was king. We had been fêted and pampered to such an extent that we had lost sight of the true proportion of things. Here were women who realised that Tommy is quite as important as his officer, that he is a man and as such has rights. We honoured the young women who could thus devote themselves to the men who really needed their help most. But this elevating thought did not appease our hunger in the least. We still wanted something to eat, and the dainty food before us failed to modify our internal cravings.

"Couldn't we have just one bun?" Reggy coaxed.

The young woman smilingly shook her head. "It's against our rules," she replied.

Reggy looked distressed. We imitated his look with such success that another young woman, who seemed to be the one in authority, came forward and volunteered:

"If you will step into the house, gentlemen, I shall see what the *concierge* can do for you there."

That we didn't fall upon her neck in sheer thankfulness speaks well for our self-control.

We kept sufficient restraint upon ourselves, however, to merely murmur our gratitude in becoming words. We explained that we had just arrived, and that our mess was not yet open.

"Well, well," she laughed. "Of course, we can't let you starve, but you really mustn't eat in here."

If the angels in heaven look anything like that sweet young woman as she appeared to us at that moment—well, it's a great incentive to lead a good life, that's all.

We were ushered into a quaint French dining-room, furnished with hand-carved mahogany. That a carpenter should have such exquisite taste surprised us. We were yet to learn that the artistic sense is a keynote of French character. The owner of the cottage was away at the war; he was one of the *poilus* who were then, and are still, upholding the martial traditions of a noble fighting race. His wife spread a dainty table for us, and we breakfasted for the first time in France.

Our menu consisted of small mackerel, rolls and coffee! How prosaic it sounds in Eng-

lish! We shall always remember that *petit dejeuner* in French: *Petits maqueraux, petits pains et café-au-lait.* What music there is in such a language! The food itself loses its identity and is transformed into the sustenance of the gods!

Days passed by, but there was no word from our colonel, and no orders came for us to move. Had they all forgotten us? Had we by mischance taken the wrong boat and landed in the wrong part of France? What had become of our colonel and the rest of our unit? These thoughts perplexed and worried us. But one day, as we were lunching, a messenger suddenly appeared at the tent door and asked for the senior major.

"Telegram for you, sir," he said.

The major slowly unfolded it, read it as slowly, refolded it and placed it in his pocket without a word. Could it be from the colonel? If so, where was he? The major continued his meal. At last Fraser could bear the suspense no longer.

"Was that a message from the colonel?" he inquired anxiously.

"It was," the major replied.

One might have heard the proverbial pin drop—the strain was so intense. Would he never go on? Were we to hear nothing further?

Fraser ventured again: "What does he say?"

The senior major got up and left the tent without a word.

Even after all these months it pains me to record the bitter disappointment of that moment. All men have their peculiarities—Some are afflicted more than others. We may forgive, but we cannot always forget. And yet he had his good points, too; he wasn't quite all bad. Perhaps Fraser's question was injudicious; perhaps he hadn't been deferential enough to his senior officer. At any rate it was two days later when we first heard the news. The adjutant, who had been taken into the major's confidence, whispered the message to us:

"The colonel is at Boulogne, and orders will be sent us in a few days to join him. I have been told not to tell you, but I must relieve your anxiety. Keep it secret!"

How we loved him for his thoughtfulness!

The tension was broken. We were once more happy and content.

Three days later the order came to move. We were to entrain at midnight, and all day long we were busy packing. By nine everything was ready. The motor lorries were loaded, and we started our march toward the train. It was a pitch-black night and rain swept the streets in chilling torrents.

One of the horses of our team had a chafed back and could not be harnessed, so that my horse was selected to take his place. The wagon was piled high with the kit-bags of the men, and from this elevation one of the orderlies held the halter of the sick horse, which followed behind. We started down the steep hill from the camp, horses and men alike slipping upon the wet and greasy cobblestones.

Suddenly a slight explosion startled the led horse. He reared upon his hind legs, jerked the halter from the hand of the orderly and bolted down the hill into the darkness. Who would dare follow him? To ride down that incline at any rate faster than a walk was sheer recklessness. Surely no horse

or man who attempted to do so would return alive. But Huxford, putting spurs to his horse, plunged down the hill at breakneck speed, a shower of sparks flying out on either side as the horse's steel shoes struck the stones.

"Good God!" cried Barker; "he'll never come back—he's a dead man!"

"Why didn't he let the horse go?" cried the senior major anxiously. "Now we've lost two horses and a man. He doesn't know the city or where we are going, and even if he gets through alive, he'll never find us again."

"How could he expect to overtake a runaway horse in a strange city on a night like this? It's madness!" exclaimed the adjutant.

"He was a fine lad," said the quartermaster sadly, as though Huxford were already dead. "Seems such a pity to lose him. I didn't think he had the courage to do it."

But war shatters preconceived ideas. No one can tell which men are brave until the crisis comes. Those who seem strongest fail; those who seem weakest succeed.

A gloom had been cast over us all. We despaired of seeing Huxford again—except perhaps to find his mangled body somewhere

at the foot of that long hill. When we reached the bottom he wasn't there, and we went on despondently for a mile or more, knowing the hopelessness of trying to find him; when suddenly, as we turned a corner, he appeared, still on horseback and leading the runaway. A cheer from the boys greeted him.

"Well done, Huxford!" cried the senior major. "We never expected to see you again!"

"I couldn't let him go, sir, 'cause th' colonel giv' th' horses into my charge, an' he *had* to be caught."

May we all fulfil our duty as faithfully as this lad!

The queer little French train, with its cars marked eight *chevaux*—forty *hommes* (8 horses—40 men) was waiting at the station when we arrived. The transport officer had told the senior major not to leave until he had received his papers, but to get the men and horses aboard.

Shortly before midnight all were entrained. The equipment and horses were loaded, but there was no sign of either engine or conductor. We unrolled our sleeping-bags, placed

them upon the seats in the compartment coach and fell asleep. At four a.m. we were awakened by an angry discussion taking place on the train platform. One voice was French, evidently that of the train conductor; the other was unmistakably that of the senior major. He was talking very loudly:

"I tell you, you can't move this train one inch until I get my papers."

The reply was in French:

"Comprend pas, monsieur!" Evidently he was about to signal the engineer to start.

"Stop! I command you to stop!" shouted the major again.

The Frenchman understood the action, if he failed to understand the words. *"Il faut partir tout de suite, monsieur,"* he replied with respectful firmness, and then, placing the bugle to his lips, he blew a signal to the engineer and the train started.

The major sprang from the platform just in time to catch his coach. He had not received the papers, and had had an unintelligible wordy duel in which he had been vanquished. He was boiling with rage.

"If I had my way," he stormed, "there would be only *one* language in the world!"

We were off once more. We had but a faint idea of where we were going, but we were on our way.

CHAPTER VI

WHEN we awoke the sun was high in the heavens, and through the train windows we could see the steep banks of the Seine as we wound along that picturesque river toward Rouen. From time to time we passed small villages, the red tile of their roofs contrasting prettily with the snow-white of the walls. Some houses were decorated with bright blue or green, and as they swept by the window in kaleidoscopic array, the scene was one of manifold variety.

The French love a dash of colour; it is manifest everywhere—in their clothes, their houses and their military uniforms. In the larger cities where civilisation is over-developed, and humanity is more effete, the bright colours have given place to pale and delicate shades—an indication of that transformation of life which we call art. But in these little country villages, a thousand years or more behind the times, Dame Nature still holds sway, and the primary

colours riot in their rugged strength. Centuries from now these rural hamlets, grown to greater size, losing their primitive audacity, will fade as well; and looking back will marvel at the boldness of their youth.

Every quarter-mile along the track a lone sentinel, in sky-blue coat and scarlet cap, guarded our path. With fixed *baionette* he stood hour by hour, watchful and keen. He had a little thatched sentry-box into which he might retire when it rained, and through the small round windows watch on either side.

As we pulled into the railway station at Rouen, we could see resourceful "Tommy" cooking his breakfast on a little charcoal stove. "Tommy" is always at home, no matter where we find him—whether it be on the battlefields of France or Belgium, or on the rock-bound shores of Gallipoli.

Our men descended from their coaches, lugged out their bags of bread, their cheese and jam and "bully-beef." The sergeant-cook meted out each share, and they soon were at their morning meal.

A few hours later Reggy and I were seated at luncheon in the *Hotel de la Poste.* The

salle a manger was filled with English, French and Belgian officers, and their wives or friends, and to the casual observer the place was as gay as in times of peace. But in spite of the bright colours of the uniforms, in spite of the "chic" Parisian hats and pretty faces of the ladies, one felt over all an atmosphere subdued and serious.

It is true wine sparkled upon almost every table, but in France this doesn't necessarily mean gaiety. Every Frenchman drinks wine, but it is very rare indeed to see one drunk. Wine, like water at home, is used as a beverage —not as an intoxicant.

Imbued with the spirit of the time and place, Reggy and I called for a bottle of old *Chambertin,* and under its mellowing influence, care and the war were soon forgotten.

Of course we visited the Cathedral, and listened to the old sexton pouring incomprehensible data into our stupid ears for half an hour while we examined the rare stained windows and the carved oak door. When we returned to the train, the senior major and the transport officer were deep in conversation:

"But where are your papers?" the R. T. O. was asking.

"We haven't any," the major replied. "That French conductor wouldn't hold the train until they arrived. Can't we go on without them?"

"Where are you going?"

"We presume to Boulogne—the rest of the unit is there, but we have no orders. When does the train leave, please?"

"There'll be one at 3 p.m., and if you wish to take that, get your men aboard."

We might have been touring France—he was so nonchalant, and there was such an absence of "red-tape." Imagine in these hypermartial days being told to "take the 3 p.m. train if we wished!" Nowadays it is not a matter of volition; units go where and when they are commanded, and a definite system has replaced haphazard. But the old way had its good points—it still let one believe he was in part his own master.

Having a sense of duty and, moreover, being anxious to reach our destination—wherever that might be—we entrained once more and travelled all the balance of that day and night.

Promptly at 3 p.m. Reggy fell asleep, and didn't wake once, not even to eat, until the following morning at six o'clock, when with a crash he was thrown off his couch to the floor of the train. Thus rudely startled, but not quite wide awake, he ejaculated:

"Torpedoed, by Gad!"

We didn't take time to wake Reggy and explain the situation, but sprang to our feet and threw open the door of the train. What had happened? We were at Boulogne; our train had collided with another in the railway yards, but fortunately only one coach was crushed and no one hurt. We descended to the tracks and found other coaches on other trains in a similar condition.

It was not difficult to understand the cause. The German spy leaves nothing undone, and was very careful to attend to such details as changing the railway switches to the wrong tracks. By now the spies have been almost completely weeded out; but in those days they were very active.

How thorough was their system was well illustrated when, later on, the Western Cavalry entered the trenches. A wooden horse rose in-

stantly above the German trench, bearing this legend: "Western Cavalry, come over and get your horses!" Our boys promptly shot the offending animal full of holes. It fell; but in a moment was raised again with bandages about its neck and leg!

Despite the early morning hour, in a railway car a few yards from us, several young Englishwomen were busy serving hot cocoa and rolls to the hungry soldiers. The interior of the coach had been transformed into a kitchen and travelling buffet. Every man in uniform was welcome to enter and partake free of charge. We took advantage of this practical hospitality and, much refreshed, returned to our own train.

At another platform a regiment of Ghurkas were engaged loading their equipment. One came across to our engine and drawing some hot water from the boiler, washed his teeth and mouth with infinite care.

The Ghurka is so like the Jap in appearance that when, later, we saw a body of these brave little chaps, with their turned-up Stetson hats, marching along the street, for a moment we actually mistook them for our Oriental allies.

It was only when we observed their short broad swords (kukris) that we realised it could be none other than these famous men from India.

The colonel was at the station to meet us. How glad we were to see his genial face once more!

"Your billets are all arranged," he said. "The officers will stay at the *Louvre* and the non-commissioned officers and men at the *Jean d'arc* theâtre."

The men were lined-up and, now that the unit was once more complete, formed quite an imposing sight. In those days medical units wore the red shoulder straps; the privilege of retaining these coloured straps has been granted only to members of the First Contingent.

The men marched across *Le Pont Marguet,* up the main thoroughfare, along the *Rue Victor Hugo,* crossing the market place, and in a narrow street not far from the market found the little theâtre. It made a perfect billet, the main hall serving as a mess room, and the gallery as an excellent dormitory.

The quartermaster, Reggy, and I were bil-

leted in one large room at the *Louvre*. Our window overlooked the basin and across the quay we could see the fish-wives unloading the herring boats as they arrived in dozens. With their queer wooden shoes (sabots) they clack-clacked across the cobblestones; their large baskets, overflowing with fish, strapped to their backs. Among all the varied odours of that odorous city, that of fish rises supreme. It saluted our nostrils when we marched in the streets, and was wafted in at our windows when the thoughtless breeze ventured our way.

We could see too, the Channel boats arriving at the dock, bringing battalion after battalion of troops. These rapidly entrained, and were whisked away in the shrill-whistling little French trains toward the battlefront.

Sometimes convoys of London 'busses, now bereft of their advertisements and painted dull grey, filled with "Tommies" destined for the "big show," passed by the door and rolled away into the far beyond.

The second morning of our stay at Boulogne Reggy awoke feeling that he really *must* have a bath. Why he should consider himself dif-

ferent from all the other people in France, is a matter I am not prepared to discuss. A bath, in France, is a luxury, so to speak, and is indulged in at infrequent intervals—on fête days or some other such auspicious occasion.

He rang the bell to summon the maid. In a few moments a tousled blonde head-of-hair, surmounted by a scrap of old lace, was thrust inside the door.

"Monsieur?" it enquired.

Reggy prided himself upon his French—he had taken a high place in college in this particular subject, but, as he remarked deprecatingly, his French seemed a bit too refined for the lower classes, who couldn't grasp its subtleties.

"Je veux un bain," he said.

He was startled by the ease with which she understood. Could it be that he looked—but, no, he appeared as clean as the rest of us. At any rate, she responded at once in French:

"Oui, monsieur. I'll bring it in to you." She withdrew her head and closed the door.

"What the deuce," cried Reggy, as he sat up quickly in bed. "She'll *bring in* the bath! Does she take me for a canary?"

"A canary doesn't make such a dickens of a row as you do," growled the quartermaster, "looking for a bath at six a.m."

I tried to console him by reminding him that it was much better to have Reggy sweet and clean than in his present state, but he said it made small difference to him as he had a cold in his head anyway. Reggy, as an interested third party, began to look upon our controversy as somewhat personal, and was about to interfere when a rap at the door cut short further argument.

Two chambermaids entered the room, carrying between them a tin pan about two feet in diameter and six inches in depth. It contained about a gallon of hot water. They placed it beside his bed.

"Voici, monsieur!" cried she of the golden locks.

Reggy leaned over the side of the bed and looked down at it.

"Sacré sabre de bois;" he exclaimed. "It isn't a drink I want—it's a bath—'bain'—to wash—'laver' ye know!"

He made motions with his hands in excellent imitation of a gentleman performing his

morning ablutions. They nodded approvingly, and laughed:

"*Oui, monsieur*—it *is* the bath."

"Well, I'll be d——" But before Reggy could conclude the two maids had smilingly withdrawn.

Reggy explored the room in his pyjamas and emptied our three water pitchers into the pan.

"Now I'll at least be able to get my feet wet," he grumbled. "Where's the soap?" he exclaimed a moment later. "There isn't a bally cake of soap in the room."

It was true. This is one of the petty annoyances of French hotels. Soap is never in the room and must be purchased as an extra, always at the most inopportune moment. After half an hour's delay Reggy succeeded in buying a cake from the porter, and his bath proceeded without further mishap. He then tumbled into bed again and fell asleep.

The maids shortly returned to carry out the bath, but when they saw how Reggy had exhausted all the water in the room they held up their hands in undisguised astonishment.

"Monsieur is extravagant," they exclaimed,

"to waste so much water!" Fortunately "Monsieur" was fast asleep, so the remark passed unnoticed.

Later we approached the *concierge,* and asked here if there were not a proper bath-tub in the place. She laughed. *Les Anglais* were so much like ducks—they wanted to be *always* in the water.

"But I will soon have it well for you," she declaimed with pride. "I am having two bath tubs placed in the cellar, and then you may play in the water all the day."

At the time we looked upon this as her little joke, but when, weeks later, one early morning we noticed a tall *Anglais* walking through the hotel "lounge" in his pyjamas, with bath towel thrown across his arm, we realised that she had spoken truth. The bath tubs were really and truly in the cellar.

It was ten days before we succeeded in locating the building which we wanted for our hospital. All the suitable places in Boulogne were long since commandeered. Every large building, including all the best hotels, had been turned into hospitals, so that we were forced to go far afield. Finally, twenty-two miles from

the city, we found a summer hotel exactly suited to our needs. It was in a pine forest, and close to the sea shore, an ideal spot for a hospital.

During these ten days the talent of our corps conceived the idea of holding a concert in the *Jean d'arc* hall.

At this time all theatres, music halls, and even "movies" in France were closed, and music was tabooed. France was taking the war seriously. She was mourning her dead and the loss of her lands. The sword had been thrust deeply into her bosom, and the wound was by no means healed. The streets were filled with widows, and their long black veils symbolised the depth of the nation's grief.

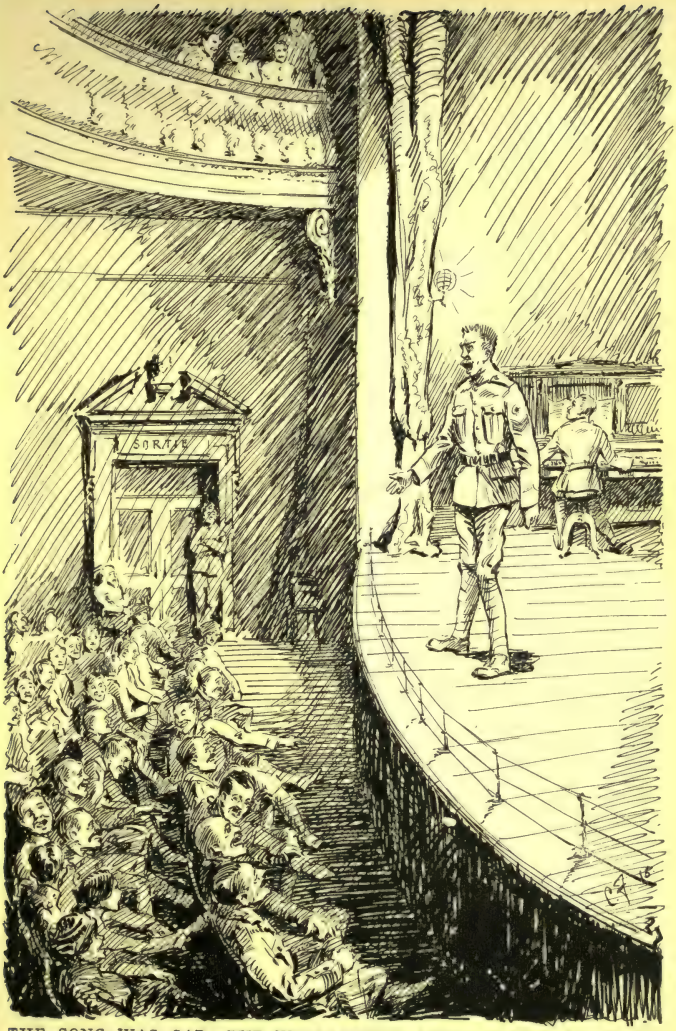
Let those who will admire the light-heartedness of Britain—Britain wears no mourning for her heroes dead. In Britain it is *bourgeois* to be despondent. We keep up an appearance of gaiety even when our hearts are heaviest. But France is too natural, too frank for such deception. What she feels, she shows upon the surface. At first our apparent indifference to our losses and hers was a source of irritation. France resented it; but now she

knows us better. We are not indifferent—it is merely an attitude. The two nations now understand one another, and in that understanding lies the foundation of a firmer friendship.

With success and confidence in the future, France has risen out of the "slough of despond." She has recovered a portion of her old-time light-heartedness. We thought her effervescent, artificial and unstable; we have found her steadfast, true and unshakable. She has manifested throughout this desperate struggle a grim and immutable determination that has been the marvel of her allies and the despair of her enemies.

Realising the temporary distaste for amusement in France, our little concert was intended to be private and confined solely to our own unit. But a few of the new-found French friends of the boys waived their objections to entertainment, and as a special favour volunteered to come.

It was a strange and moving sight to see a Canadian audience in that far-off land, gravely seated in their chairs in the little hall, waiting for the curtain to rise. Our staff of Nursing



THE SONG WAS SAD—BUT WE LAUGHED AND LAUGHED UNTIL WE WEPT AGAIN

Sisters honoured the boys with their presence, and every officer and man was there. Thirty or forty of the native population, in black, a little doubtful of the propriety of their action, were scattered through the khaki-clad.

The boys outdid themselves that night. How well they sang those songs of home! We were carried back thousands of miles across the deep to our dear old Canada, and many an eye was wet with tears which dare not fall.

But reminiscence fled when Sergeant Honk assumed the stage. Some one had told Honk he could sing, and—subtle flatterer—he had been believed. With the first wild squeaky note we were back, pell-mell in France. The notes rose and fell—but mostly fell; stumbling over and over one another in their vain endeavour to escape from Honk. Some maintained he sang by ear. Perhaps he did—he didn't sing by mouth and chords long lost to human ken came whistling through his nose. The song was sad—but we laughed and laughed until we wept again.

At the end of the first verse he seemed a little bewildered by the effect, but he had no advantage over us in that respect. At the end

of the second verse, seeing his hearers in danger of apoplexy, he hesitated, and turning to Taylor, the pianist, muttered in an aside:

"They downt understand h'English, them bloakes—this ayn't a funny song—blimed if I downt quit right 'ere, and serve 'em jolly well right too!"

And under a perfect storm of applause and cries of protest, Honk departed as he had come —anglewise.

Tim and his brother then had a boxing-bout; and Cameron, who acted as Tim's second, drew shrieks of joy from his French admirers, between rounds, as he filled his mouth with water and blew it like a penny shower into the perspiring breathless face of Tim.

"A wee drap watter refraishes ye, Tim," he declared argumentatively after one of these showers.

"Doze Pea-jammers tinks it's funny," Tim puffed. "Let dem have a good time—dey ain't see'd nuthin' much lately—an' a good laff 'ull help dem digest dere 'patty de frog-grass!"

CHAPTER VII

It was my fate, or fortune, to be in charge of the advance party which was detailed to prepare for the opening of our hospital.

Captain Burnham and I, with about forty N.C.O.s and men, and with two days' rations, left Boulogne one cold November afternoon, a few days after the concert. After a slow train journey of three hours' duration, we were deposited at the railway station of a fishing village on the coast.

If Boulogne prides itself on its odour of dead fish, this little place must be an everlasting thorn in its side; for all the smells of that maladorous city fade into insignificance before the concentrated "incense" of the back streets of Etaples. We didn't linger unnecessarily in the village, but pushed on at the "quick-march" and, crossing the bridge, were soon on the broad paved road which runs through *Le Touquet* forest.

It was just dusk, and snow had fallen to the

depth of about two inches; the most we saw in two winters during our stay in that part of France. It was a crisp, cold evening, and the swinging pace of our march did much to keep us warm.

From time to time we passed large summer residences and artistic villas partly hidden in the woods, but all the doors were closed, and all the windows were dark. Not a human being passed us on the road, and the noise of our shoes crunching through the crusted snow was the only sound which broke the solemn stillness of the air.

Our men too seemed oppressed with the weird solitude of the forest and seldom spoke above a whisper.

"Seems as though the world were dead," said Burnham, after we had walked nearly two miles in silence.

"Yes," I replied, "it gives one a creepy feeling passing through this long dark avenue of pines. The houses too look as if the inhabitants had fled and that no one had the courage to return."

"I understand the *Bosches* were through quite close to here," Burnham remarked, "in

their first mad dash for Paris, and that some German soldiers were killed near the outskirts of this wood."

"By the gruesomeness of it I can imagine they were *all* killed," I replied.

By this time we had turned at right angles to our former path and entered another long avenue of trees. The white walls of an isolated mansion stood out in the distance against the black-green of the forest and the fading purple of the evening sky. The grounds about it were enclosed by a high pointed iron fence; it looked a veritable prison.

After tramping another mile we emerged into an open space between the trees and the rolling sand dunes of the coast, and saw before us a large limestone building, three stories in height and almost surrounded with broad, glass-enclosed balconies. The tracks of a disused tramway ran to the gate, and the rust upon the rails spoke more forcibly than ever of desolation and desertion.

We passed through the stone gateway and crossed the snow-covered lawn. Everything was as dark and dreary as the grave. Surely no one was within! We mounted the steps and

rang the bell. Its peal reverberated strangely through the empty halls. After a few moments, however, a light appeared and a solitary man entered the rotunda; he turned the electric switch, flooding the room with a bright light. He came to the door, unlocked it, and rolled it back slowly upon its wheels.

"Gut evening, zhentlemen," he said in English, but with a peculiar Franco-German accent difficult to diagnose. "It iss fery kolt, iss it not?"

We acknowledged the fact.

"You are vrom the Canadian Hospital?" he queried.

"You were evidently expecting us," I replied. "We are the advance party from that hospital."

He pushed the door wide for us to enter. We didn't debate the propriety of accepting the hospitality of a German, but marched in at once.

"Your dinner vill be retty in a leedle vhile. I vill haf Alvred ligh'd you the grate, und you soon fery comfortable vill be."

"Show me to the kitchen first," I asked him, "and let me see what arrangements you have

for supper for the men. When they are made comfortable it will be plenty of time for our dinner."

He piloted us into a large room with red tile floor. There was good accommodation for the men, and the kitchen ranges were close by. They had their cooks and rations with them, and as soon as we had chosen their sleeping quarters and had seen that everything was satisfactory we returned for our own dinner.

In a commodious room, just off the rotunda, a roaring coal fire was blazing on the hearth. Big easy-chairs had been conveniently placed for us, and Burnham and I fell into them and stretched our tired feet toward the fender upon the rich red Turkish rug. The table was spread close by, and we noticed the fine linen, the sparkling cut glass, crested silver and *Limoge* china. The scent of delicious French cooking was wafted to us past the heavy silken hangings of the door. Presently our German host appeared once more:

"Vat vine vill the zhentlemen have mit zehr dinner?" he enquired politely.

Burnham threw himself back into his seat

and laughed aloud. "Holy smoke!" he chuckled, "and we are at the war!"

"What wines have you?" I enquired tentatively.

"Anyzing you wish to name, zir," he responded with a certain show of pride.

I thought I would put him to the test. "Bring us a bottle of 'Ayala,' '04 vintage," I commanded.

'Mit pleasure, zir." And he bowed and retired to get it.

Burnham slapped his knee and burst out: "Am I awake or dreaming? We walk four miles through a stark forest on a winter night, enter a deserted hostel, are received by a German spy and fêted like the Lord Mayor. I expect to fall out of the balloon any minute and hit the earth with a nasty bump!"

"I'm a little dazed myself," I admitted, "but it's all a part of the soldier-game. Some other day we'll find the cards reversed, and have to play it just the same."

Our host, however, was not a German, although that was his native tongue. He came from that little-known country of Luxembourg, which, sandwiched in between France

and her Teutonic enemy, has still maintained a weak and unavailing neutrality. Being too small and unprotected to resist, the German army marched unmolested across it in the early days of war.

"Alvred," who was a French-Swiss, and spoke more languages than I can well remember, waited upon us at table. We were just finishing an excellent five-course dinner with a tiny glass of *coin-treau,* when the sound of a motor-car stopping at the door aroused us from our dream of heavenly isolation.

As we stepped into the hall, the door opened, and in walked the colonel, the senior major and the quartermaster, who had followed us from Boulogne by road.

"Well, how do you like our new hospital?" the colonel demanded with a satisfied smile.

"We love it," Burnham exclaimed. "It is weird, romantic and altogether *comme il faut.*"

I suggested that a liqueur and a cigar might not be unacceptable after their long drive. The colonel smiled appreciatively as he replied:

"We *are* a bit chilly after our journey; I think a little drink will do us good. What do

you say, Major Baldwin?" This question was addressed to the senior major, who, with the others, had now entered our dining room.

The artistic surroundings drove the major into poetry at once. He exclaimed:

"'Ah! my beloved, fill the cup that clears
To-day of past regrets and future fears.'"

"Splendid!" cried Burnham enthusiastically. "Now, let's have 'Gunga Din'—you do it so well! How does it go? 'You're a better drink than I am, Gordon Gin!'"

"No, no!" said the major deprecatingly. "You mustn't abuse Kipling—it's too early in the evening."

Whether the major intended abusing that famous author at a later hour, or merely reciting from him, we didn't enquire. We talked until late, formulating our plans for the morrow and for many days to come. We made a tour of inspection about the building. The colonel unfolded his plans as we walked along the halls.

"This suite," he said, as we came to the end of the hall, "will make a splendid pair of

operating rooms, an anæsthetic and a sterilising room. The fifth will do for a dressing room for the surgeons, and in the sixth Reggy will have full sway—that will be his eye and ear reformatory. On the left we'll install our X-ray plant, so that all surgical work may be done in this one wing."

"What about the hotel furnishings," I enquired, "are they to remain in places?"

"Everything must go, except what is absolutely necessary to the comfort or care of patients," he replied. "It seems a pity, but we are here not only to cure patients, but to protect the Government from needless expense. In the morning set the men to work dismantling the entire building."

We walked along to the opposite end of the hall.

"Here's a fine room," exclaimed Major Baldwin, as he peeped into the dainty boudoir which I had chosen as a bedroom. "Who sleeps in this luxurious state?"

"I do—for to-night," I replied.

"I want that room for myself," he declared. "It looks like the best in the place."

How is it we always want that which the

other fellow has? Its value seems enhanced by its inaccessibility.

"It shall be yours to-morrow night," I replied to this covetous request. It was no deprivation to give it up as there were fifty other rooms, which the Major had not seen, more richly decorated and more attractive than mine. This little room was cosy and prettily furnished in bird's-eye maple. It boasted an Axminster rug, a brass bed, and the glow from the open fire lent it a charm which had captivated Major Baldwin's eye.

There were other suites of rooms, with private baths attached, and hot and cold running water. The floors were covered with costly Persian rugs, and the furniture was of hand-carved olive wood or mahogany. Private balconies overlooked the golf course and the forest. Every detail bespoke wealth and luxury combined with the most modern contrivances for comfort.

The colonel was amused at us: "Pick out whatever rooms you like," he said, "and enjoy yourselves while you may, for in three days' time no one but patients will live in this building. The men will sleep in the Golf-club

house, the nurses in one of these deserted villas, and we shall have another villa for ourselves."

We discovered that our hospital building was owned by an English company; hence the great number of bathrooms—thirty-four in all. The halls and glass enclosed balconies were steam heated throughout, and each room had its old-fashioned open fireplace to combat the chill of winter days.

At midnight the colonel and his party left us and commenced their return journey to Boulogne. Burnham and I climbed the stairs to my bedroom, our footsteps echoing loudly through the untenanted halls. We sat and chatted for an hour before the fire. I was getting very sleepy—we had dined well—and as I looked at Burnham his form seemed to dwindle to smaller and smaller proportions until he looked like a pigmy from Lilliput. I amused myself awhile watching this strange phenomenon. By and by his diminutive size provoked me to remark:

"Do you know, Burnham, although an hour ago when you entered the room, I mistook you for a full-grown man, I can now see that in

reality you are only about ten inches tall—yet your every feature is perfect."

"Much obliged for the compliment implied in your last clause," he laughed; "you corroborate suspicions which I have long entertained that I'm a handsome dog whose beauty has remained unappreciated. It's a strange coincidence, but I am labouring under the opposite delusion, and although an hour ago you waddled into the room—just an ordinary fat man; now I view you as a Colossus."

I rather approved his regarding me as a Colossus, but saw that I must at once frown upon that "waddling" idea. It's an impression I can't afford to let go abroad.

"Come, let's to bed," I cried, "and sleep 'will knit your ravelled sleeve of care'—I really think your wide-awake impressions are the worst!"

We arose at six and under our direction the men commenced the work of disrobing the hotel. The stern necessities of war permit no sentiment. Everything had to go: The beautiful paintings, the silken hangings, the Oriental rugs, the artistic statuary, were all rapidly removed and packed away for safety.

The card and dining rooms and lounges were stripped of their carpets, and before night its former guests would scarce have recognised the place. Sanitation is the first and paramount law of a Military Hospital; carpets and unnecessary furniture are a source of danger, for such a variety of diseases follow the troops that special care must be given to every possibility for infection and its prevention.

By five that evening the colonel, the matron and the nursing sisters arrived, and a few hours later came the balance of our officers and men. Motor lorries and ambulances toiled through the gates, laden with our equipment. Hundreds of boxes, crates of iron beds, bales of mattresses and blankets, folding bedside tables, bags of tents and poles, were brought to the door in an apparently endless stream. As fast as the lorries arrived the men unloaded them, piling boxes and bales under the balconies for protection.

Huxford and the team did their share too, bringing up loads of food from the train for the men and for prospective patients.

The senior major was pale and tired; he had been up since dawn and had worked hard.

Nothing had been forgotten, and the transport of men and accoutrement had been accomplished systematically and well. He was a good soldier, true to his duty, stern and unflinching, and he never asked others to work without being willing to do more than his own share. Tired as he was, he would neither rest nor eat until the last box was unloaded, and the last lorrie had left the grounds—and the men shared his deprivation.

It was almost nine p.m. as Tim and Barker, staggering under the weight of a tremendous case, came across the driveway and dumped the last box to the ground. Tim sat breathless for a moment upon it, then looked wearily up at Barker, with his head on one side as was his custom when he soliloquised.

"Dat's a heavy load t'get offen an empty stummick," he gasped. "I can't lif' annuder poun' until I gets a slab o' roas' beef under me belt. I'm dat hungry I could lick de sweat off a bake-shop window."

"I smell supper cookin' now," said Barker. "Did ye see th' ranges? *Some* cookery, I kin tell ye—they kin roast a whole cow at one time!"

"An' I kin eat dat same cow jus' as fas' as dey kin roast it," Tim declared. "I'm dat weak from starvation dat a drink uv holy water 'ud make me drunk!"

About nine-thirty p.m. the men fell upon their supper like a pack of hungry wolves.

"Gee!—Don't food taste good—when ye're hungry," drawled Wilson, with his mouth full.

"Dat's right," Tim replied. "Glad t' see ye're perkin' up an' takin' a little notice agin. I t'ought youse and Huxford wuz about all in."

"Where'd you get the onion?" Wilson queried.

"I foun' dis in d' hotel garbage," said Tim, as he took a large bite out of a Spanish specimen, an' I wuz jus' t'inkin' wat a diff'rence there is 'tween an onion and a cake. Hav ye noticed it yerself?"

"I hevn't eat cake in so long I don't s'pose I could tell 'em apart now," Wilson replied.

"Well, dey say ye can't eat yer cake an' hev it too; but wit an onion it's different—wen ye eat it, it's like castin' yer bread upon de troubled waters—it'll always come back t' ye."

Cameron looked up as if he were about to correct this scriptural misquotation. It seemed

to harass his religious sense. He opened his mouth to speak, but it was too full for utterance, and he had to content himself with a reproachful look at Tim.

Ten o'clock found everybody sleepy and exhausted. The boys didn't trouble to go to their quarters, but, crawling into any available corner, threw themselves down upon bundles or empty beds, and soon were fast asleep. The sergeant-major was too tired to care, and for one night at least discipline was happily forgotten.

In the morning early we were at it again, tooth and nail. If some of our friends at home, who think the trained nurse is too proud to work, could have only seen those splendid girls on their first day in the new hospital, they would still be lost in wonder. They washed woodwork and windows, helped to put up unruly beds, swept the floors and did a hundred other menial labours—menial only because in our artificial life we call them so—cheerfully and speedily.

If some day, by chance, one of our nursing sisters reads these lines, and blushes at the recollection of her work that day, let her re-

member that by that very labour, in our eyes, she was glorified. We shall always remember with pride those brave girls who were not afraid, when duty called, to "stoop and conquer."

The following evening I was despatched to Boulogne to interview the A.D.M.S. regarding our hospital. I was met at the office door by the D.A.D.M.S., who was one of that breed of cock-sure officer—now *merci a Dieu* almost extinct.

"Hello," he cried brusquely. "Is your hospital ready for patients?"

"We should prefer another day or two of preparation, sir," I replied.

"How long have you been out there now?" he demanded.

"Two days, sir."

"What! At the end of two days you mean to tell me you're not ready! You're very slow."

It was the first time we had been accused of sluggishness. It was undeserved, and I resented it accordingly. I replied—not too politely, I fear:

"You will please remember we had to dis-

mantle and remove the carpets and furniture of a large hotel, take stock of the fixtures and house-clean the building before commencing the setting up of our hospital equipment. We are ready for two hundred patients now—but we prefer another day or two to make everything complete."

"I'll send you two hundred patients tonight," he cried. "Be prepared for them."

The A.D.M.S., a typical English gentleman of the old school, interfered. He called his deputy aside and said to him:

"You mustn't rush patients into a new hospital in this manner. Give them a few days' grace." He turned to me and continued: "You will receive a trainload of patients three days from now. That will give you plenty of time. Kindly inform your commanding officer to this effect."

Some men brush one's fur the wrong way, and others smooth it back again. I had been so rumpled by the D.A.D.M.S. that every bristle of my not too gentle nature was standing on end—it was not only what he said, but the manner of the saying; yet the A.D.M.S., with one gentle, kindly stroke of common sense,

had soothed and made me human once again. I felt my wrath slipping quietly away, and I basked for a moment in the sunshine of a genial personality. I gratefully murmured:

"Thank you, sir. I shall tell him."

"I trust your hospital will soon prove itself a credit to your staff and to Canada. Good night, and good luck," he said, as he shook me warmly by the hand.

It was midnight of the third day after this interview. The orderly on duty in the hall was suddenly startled by the sharp ring of the telephone bell. He sprang to his feet and put the strange French receiver to his ear.

"Yes, this is the Canadian Hospital," he answered; and a distant voice gave this message:

"A train-load of three hundred wounded will arrive at the station at two a.m. Be ready for them!"

CHAPTER VIII

At last the time for action had come. Three hundred wounded would arrive in two hours; one-fifth the number would throw the average city hospital into confusion. Nurses and officers hurried from their villas to the hospital. The cooks and orderlies were already on duty, and the hospital presented a scene of bustling but systematic activity.

Our ten wards, each named after a province of our beloved Dominion, were soon ready for the reception of patients, and the deft hands of the nursing sisters added the final touch of extra preparation.

The colonel's motor car throbbed in waiting at the door, and ambulance after ambulance, with its quota of stretcher-bearers, whirled away into the darkness of the forest on the road to the station. It was a clear, cold night. The ground was hardened by the frost, and the pale quarter-moon cast a faint chill light over the trees.

Reggy and I clambered into the colonel's car as it started, and in a moment we were moving swiftly through the gaunt, trembling shadows of the wood. As we approached the turning of the road we could see in the distance the flashing headlights of other motors from the English hospital, as they too sped toward the train.

When we reached the station a constant stream of vehicles was pouring through the gates, and as fast as each car or ambulance arrived, it was backed into the waiting line. Every few yards carbide jets spluttered in the wind, adding their fitful glare to the strangeness of the scene.

After about an hour's wait the shrill whistle of the incoming French train warned us that our vigil was nearly over. In a few minutes the coaches, each with its big red cross, came clanking slowly into the station yard. Car after car passed by: one, two, three,—ten,—twenty; it was a tremendous train. At last it stopped, the doors opened and we had our first glimpse of the brave boys who had held the line.

Dozens of Scots and English battalions were

represented, but there were no Canadians save ourselves as yet in France. Some of the boys could stand or walk, and they clambered slowly and painfully down the steep steps and stood in little wondering groups. God knows they looked tired, and their clothes were still covered with the dried mud from the trenches; for during a battle speed and the necessities of the moment are the important things—the refinements of civilisation must await time and opportunity. Many were smoking cigarettes; some had bandages about their head or hands or feet; some had their arms in slings; but from none was there the slightest groan or sound of complaint. They waited with soldierly but pathetic patience until we were ready to take care of them.

One tall young man who was standing apart from the others and whose face was unusually pale, approached me and saluted. His right hand was thrust into the bosom of his coat, with his left he nervously drew a cigarette from his pocket.

"Would you mind helping me light this, sir?" he asked respectfully. "I can't protect the match from the wind."

As I assisted him I enquired: "Have you had your right hand wounded? I see you keep it in your coat."

"It's not exactly that, sir," he replied, with a faint smile. "I have no right hand—had it blown off this morning." He drew the bandaged stump from his breast as he spoke and held it up for inspection.

"But you must be suffering frightfully!" I exclaimed in pity, surprised at his coolness.

"It does give me 'Gip' now and again. I can bear it better when I smoke," and he pulled tremulously at his cigarette.

I helped the brave fellow into one of the waiting motors and turned to see what I could do for the others. There were dozens with bandaged feet who limped slowly toward the ambulances.

"What has happened to you chaps?" I enquired, as I came to a group of six, all apparently suffering from the same condition, and who could scarcely walk.

"Trench feet, sir," they answered readily.

At the time this was a new disease to me, but we soon saw all too much of it. It corresponds quite closely to what in Canada is

known as "chilblain," but is much more painful, and is in some ways equivalent to "frost-bite." It is caused by prolonged immersion in ice-cold water or liquid mud. In those days too, the trenches were not as well built as they are to-day, or the ground was lower and more boggy. Men were subjected to great privations, and suffered untold hardships. "Trench foot" has now almost entirely disappeared, and conditions in the trenches are altogether better.

"Were you standing long in the water?" I asked them.

"We've been in it night and day since Sunday," they replied—and this was Friday!

"Was the water deep?" I asked.

"The mud was up to the waist," one answered; "an' poor Bill Goggins stepped in a 'ole in the trench an' were drowned afore we could get to 'im."

Another spoke up: "A lad from my platoon got into a part of the trench that were like a quicksand, on'y 'e went down so fast—like as if there was a suction from below. We seen 'im goin', an' 'e called fer 'elp, but w'en we got to 'im 'e were down to 'is chin, an' we couldn't pull 'im back."

"Good heavens!" I exclaimed in horror. "Was he drowned too?"

" 'E were that, sir," he replied. "It were jolly 'ard to see 'im go, an' us right there!" and there were tears in the good fellow's eyes as he spoke.

"Climb into the motor, boys," I said. "We'll try to make up a little for the hell you've all been through."

There were others who had been severely wounded; some with broken arms or legs; some shot through the head or chest. It was wonderful to see the gentleness and kindness of our own rough lads as they lifted them tenderly from bed to stretcher, and carried them from the train to the waiting ambulances.

I stepped inside the train for a moment. It was a marvel of a hospital on wheels. It had comfortable spring beds and mattresses, and soft woollen blankets. There were kitchens, a dispensary, an emergency operating room and even bathrooms. A staff of medical officers, nurses and trained orderlies did all which human power can do to make the men comfortable during a trying journey. Every man had had his supper, and his wounds had been

dressed *en route* as scientifically and carefully as if he had been in a "Base Hospital."

The ambulances rolled slowly away from the train with their precious loads, the drivers cautiously picking their way along the smoothest parts of the road; for to the man with a broken leg or arm the slightest jolt causes pain.

We saw the boys again at the entrance to the hospital, lying in rows on stretchers, or standing patiently in line, waiting until their names and numbers were duly recorded. Each one, as this procedure was completed, was given a little card on which the name of his ward and the number of his bed was written. He was then conducted or carried to his allotted place.

How tired they looked as they sat wearily upon the edge of their beds, waiting for the orderlies to come and assist them to undress! But even here they were able to smile and crack their little jokes from bed to bed.

As soon as they were undressed, they were given a refreshing bath, in which they revelled after their weeks of dirty work and mud. After the bath came clean, warm pyjamas, a cup of hot cocoa or soup, a slice of bread and butter,

and last, but to the soldier never least, a cigarette.

To him the cigarette is the panacea for all ills. I have seen men die with a cigarette between their lips—the last favour they had requested on earth. If the soldier is in pain, he smokes for comfort; if he is restless he smokes for solace; when he receives good news, he smokes for joy; if the news is bad, he smokes for consolation; if he is well—he smokes; when he is ill—he smokes. But good news or bad, sick or well, he *always* smokes.

As I entered the ward a Highlander, not yet undressed, was sitting upon the side of his bed puffing contentedly at his cigarette. His tunic was still spattered with dried blood.

"Are you badly wounded?" I asked him.

"Not verra badly, sir," he returned, as he stood at attention.

"But you have a lot of blood on your tunic," I said, pointing to his right side and hip.

"It's not a' mine, sir," he replied as he grinned from ear to ear—"it's a souvenir from a *Bosche,* but he did make a sma' hole in ma thigh wi' his bayonet."

"And what happened to him?"

He laughed outright this time. "He's got ma bayonet an' ma rifle too," he cried. "Oh, man, but it was a gran' ficht!"

"Is he dead?" I asked.

"Dead?" he exclaimed. "I hae his top-hat wi' me noo;" and he held up a Prussian helmet to our admiring gaze.

I congratulated him and passed on; but I had little time just then for chatting. All the wounds had to be unbandaged, washed and freshly dressed, and although we worked rapidly, the nurses undoing the bandages and attending to the minor cases, while I did the more serious ones myself, it was broad daylight before we had finished. The morning sun, stealing gently over the trees, found patients and doctors alike ready for a few hours' sleep.

A similar scene had been enacted in every other ward. It was nearly six a.m. as the other officers and myself, with the exception of the unfortunate orderly officer, started down the road toward the villa. Our billet was about a quarter-mile away, but our "mess" was in the hospital building. I crawled into bed at last, very, very weary, and in a few moments was lost to the world.

It was Tim who finally roused me from this heavy sleep. He was standing at the foot of my bed with his head on one side in his customary bird-like attitude. His stiff black forelock hung straight over his brow. I was just conscious enough to hear him saying:

"Wake up, maje!"

Before strangers, or before brother officers, Tim was always respectful to us. He was a trained soldier, and, when occasion demanded, could be, and was, very regimental. But in the privacy of our home (of which he was in charge) Tim treated us like children whose pranks might be tolerated but must not be encouraged.

"What's the trouble, Tim?" I enquired sleepily.

"It's time to git up," he complained. "D'ye s'pose ye're goin' t' sleep all day, jes' because ye loss ye're beauty sleep las' night? Dis is war—dis is!"

"What's the hour?" I asked.

"It's ten o'clock," he replied, "an' dat Cap' Reggy's in de nex' room—chloroformed agin; wit his knees drawed up an' his mout' open ventilatin' his brain. Dey ain't a Pullman in

de whole worl' dat's as good a sleeper as dat gent."

By this time I was fully awake, as Tim intended I should be. I turned over on my side and addressed him:

"Run downstairs now, Tim, and make me a good hot cup of coffee, and a slice of toast with fried mushrooms on top."

Tim stared at me a moment in open-mouthed amazement. We weren't supposed to eat at the villa, but Tim was a good cook and those he favoured with his "friendship" might coax a cup of tea before rising.

"Fried mushrooms," he repeated, as he went toward the door, shaking his head slowly from side to side. "Fried—mush—rooms! Gees, an' dey calls dis *active* service!"

But in spite of this show of pessimism, he returned shortly with the breakfast as ordered.

When we reached the hospital that morning everything was as neat and clean as though nothing had happened the night before. No adequate description can be given of the trained nurse at the front. She is one of the marvels of the war. Patient, industrious, cheerful, self-sacrificing and brave, she has robbed war

of much of its horrors. She has made the wounded soldier feel that a sister's care, a mother's love and a clever woman's skill follow him wherever he goes. Her smile has cheered his lagging day; her gentle touch has soothed his pain and the warm sympathy of her kindly heart has made the foreign land a home. Under stress of work and nervous strain, ever forgetful of self, always thoughtful for others, no truer or nobler band of gentle women ever left the shores of Canada.

The patients had had a refreshing sleep and a good breakfast and were now snugly tucked in their clean sheets and warm blankets, looking very happy and contented. Even those who were badly wounded had partly forgotten their troubles. Some had souvenirs—German rifle bullets or bits of shell which had been extracted at the Clearing Hospital farther up the line, and these they exhibited with great pride to their fellow patients. The German helmet was always an object of interest. The slanting cut in the glossy leather of one spoke better than words of a bayonet thrust which had gone home. Each little bedside table had a few priceless trinkets, bought with blood, and

brought with great difficulty and care from the battlefield.

It was our custom to postpone surgical operations, except urgent ones to save life, for one or two days, in order to give the tired soldiers a chance to get a much-needed rest—a simple expedient whereby many lives were saved. The patients were grateful for this little reprieve, and showed their gratitude by recovering more rapidly.

But sometimes it was necessary to operate at once. That morning I found a poor chap who had been shot through the brain with a rifle bullet. The missile had entered the temple and emerged at the back of the skull, fracturing the bone both at the point of entry and exit. His heavy breathing and stupor told us the case called for immediate relief. In the operating room pieces of the skull were removed, the depressed bone lifted, and in about an hour the patient was taken back to his ward. We had little hope of his recovery.

The following day, when I entered the hospital, his bed was empty. I thought: "Poor fellow! He has died in the night and no one has sent me word." I turned with a feeling of dis-

appointment to the man in the next bed and asked:

"What has become of your neighbour?"

"Oh," he replied, "he's just gone out to the wash room. He'll be back in a few minutes. He stole out of the ward while the nursing sister was in the other room."

While we were talking he walked in, got quietly into bed and reached for a cigarette. I bade him good morning, repressing, as well as I could, my astonishment.

"You are feeling better this morning?" I remarked, as casually as if he had had a cold in his head.

"Oh, yes, I'm very well in myself, sir," he replied with a contented smile, "but I have a little headache—I'm thinkin' the bandages are a bit tight."

I loosened them and gave him a warning not to get up again. He seemed disappointed, but promised not to transgress a second time.

It is surprising and pleasing to know that a large percentage of men shot through the brain recover. Seven out of nine who entered the hospital one day, some months later, made

a good recovery, and when they left were apparently mentally sound.

A young lieutenant who arrived with one train load of wounded, walked unassisted up the steps, and smilingly addressed the Registrar:

"About a week ago, a sly bullet popped over the trench and caught me in the temple. Fortunately it passed out through the opposite side. They took me down to the Field Ambulance, and, as the surgeon wasn't very busy that morning, he said he'd like to take a look inside and see the works." He laughed aloud at this gruesome witticism and continued: "So he gave me a whiff of ether, opened the skull and, just as I expected, found 'nobody home.' He closed the door, and here I am, as fit as a fiddle. What a lucky devil I am to have no brains!"

A number of wounded officers had arrived with the men, and many of our private rooms were filled. We had retained the brass beds, a few practical chairs and small rugs for these rooms, and with a good fire in the grate they looked particularly cosy and attractive.

The nurses, too, took special pride in supplementing the meals of the patients, both of-

ficers and men, with delicacies of their own. To the hot roast chicken was added creamed asparagus or French peas, followed by appetising salads of fresh green vegetables—which may be had in France the year round. A bottle of ale or wine and hot-house grapes or Spanish canteloupe helped to make life pleasant and hastened them along the road to health. Oh, you may well believe that nothing was omitted which made for their comfort or well-being. We felt, and justly so, that for the men who "held the line" there was nothing in this wide world half good enough. As the inspecting general remarked to the colonel a few days later:

"Give the boys the best the land affords—if they want Malaga grapes, get them. If they want beer or wine, let them have it. Spare no expense that will make them happy and well—they deserve it all!"

As I entered the room of a young English captain, I found him propped up in bed with a few magazines and books beside him. He was looking very bright and happy.

"How are you feeling this morning?" It was our stock question.

He smiled pleasantly as he replied: "Splendid, sir, splendid. Your nurses are charmingly attentive and kind. The rooms and meals are delightful. I'm in great dread lest I get well too soon!"

He was wounded in the foot; it had been shot through with a piece of high explosive shell. The small bones were fractured, but he appeared to be suffering little. The nurse deftly assisted me with his dressing; after we had finished he said:

"I have a slip of paper here you might be interested to see. I shall always treasure it as a souvenir of a brave man."

He handed me a little crumpled square on which a few lines in pencil were scrawled, and continued: "I showed that note to my commanding officer before they carried me away. It was an humiliation, but it was my duty."

"What does it mean?" I asked him. "I'm sure this little bit of paper has a history."

He smiled reminiscently and began: "Our company had been holding a point in the lines which, under a terrific bombardment, had become untenable. The commanding officer

ordered us to withdraw to a safer trench in the rear. I called my men and we succeeded in retiring to the position indicated, in good order and with few casualties.

"I thought every man had left the advanced trench, but a few moments later when a small body of Germans attempted to storm it, we were astonished to see it defended by rapid rifle fire from some unknown source. The battle raged for some hours all along the line, but still this little spot was stubbornly held. Again and again the Germans assailed it; but each time with the same lack of success—each attack they lost twenty or thirty men, and those who reached the trench were apparently unable to oust its mysterious defenders. When dusk fell the fighting ceased; and shortly after, I received this little note—it speaks for itself."

I spread the paper upon my knee and read:

"*Sir:*

"Two other men and I were left behind when the Company withdrew. During the fight we collected in eight stragglers from other battalions, so we are now eleven. We held the line

against all the attacks. If you, sir, and the rest of the company wish to come back now, the trench is perfectly safe.

"JAMES GUFFIN,
"Sergeant."

CHAPTER IX

EVERY military unit at the front has its "mascot." Ours was no exception; in fact we overdid it, and became a sort of home for pets of all shapes and sizes, from Jean, a little French boy nine years of age, who wandered in one day from Soissons, to nursing sister Marlow's baby goat.

Jean's mother was dead; his father was fighting at the front, and the little chap being, as we discovered later, of a migratory disposition, forsook his native haunts and "took the trail." How or why he came to us, no one knows, but he liked our company, so he stayed.

A small boy being the only sort of animal we had not already adopted, was hailed with joy, and before two days had passed, we had taken up a collection and bought him a complete military uniform, from cap to boots. He couldn't speak a word of English—but he was a boy, and as we too had been boys not so very long ago we understood one another from the start.

Jean picked up English words with disturbing rapidity. He had learned several distinct and artistic varieties of oaths before we were aware he understood at all.

Jean and the goat had much in common. They had both been cast upon a warlike world at a tender age. They had both adopted us, and both accepted their living from us with gracious condescension.

According to world-wide custom, the goat was promptly nick-named "Billy," although he was a mere bundle of lank grey wool with legs so long that it must have made him dizzy every time he viewed the earth below. He was just strong enough to stagger over to the nursing bottle which Jean held out in his grimy fist.

Jogman loved Jean; Jean loved the goat, and the goat loved Jogman. Thus was established an "odd-fellows" circle into which none might break.

"Dat's a hand fer ye," Tim commented to Jogman, as the pair watched Jean feeding the goat. "A hand like dat ain't friends wit' soap an' water, but de goat ain't too pertickler."

"I washed him about an hour ago," Jogman

replied defensively, "but ye can't keep th' boy clean—he ain't happy without dirt."

Jean sat upon the ground as they spoke, still holding the nursing bottle up to Billy's greedy mouth. He understood only a little of what they were saying, but looked up quickly at the last few words.

"I'm happy here—me," he cried. *"Bien content*—damn!"

The expletive was addressed to Billy who with a sudden tug had pulled the bottle from his hand.

"Do ye know where small boys that swear go?" asked Jogman reprovingly.

"Big boys what swear go to de war," Jean contended, "an' me soldier too."

"If you do it again I'll send ye back to yer aunt at Soissons," said Jogman.

The child sprang to his feet at once, and catching him by the hand cried tearfully: "No! —No!—No!—not back to Soissons—Oh! *Je vous en prie, non!"*

What strange fear had driven him from home? He couldn't or wouldn't explain it; but he was in great dread of being sent back, and it was the one threat which influenced him.

"Well, well," said Jogman soothingly, "be a good boy, an' don't swear no more—then we kin keep ye with us."

Jogman had a good heart, but a bad stomach —it's difficult to get a perfect combination. Jogman drank; so did the goat, but they imbibed from different bottles and with different results. He had been on his good behaviour for almost two weeks—his money had run out. But pay day came at last and trouble always followed in its wake.

Thirty dollars—over one hundred and fifty francs in French money—was enough to turn the head of any soldier. With a bulging pocket the Tommy's heart throbbed nervously, until he got a chance to "blow it in." But before this fortuitous event was completed Jogman had signally disgraced himself and us. Tim accosted him as he was leaving the hospital grounds:

"Where are ye goin'?" he demanded.

"Goin' to town to see th' sights," Jogman returned with a grin.

"*Some* sights—dose gals," Tim growled. "Remember yer failin' an' don't hit de can too

hard. I can't bear seein' ye doin' mor'n six days 'First Field' per week."

Jogman had good cause to know to what form of military punishment Tim alluded. He had already had several trials of it.

Paris-plage was only two miles distant, and its smart cafés and pretty girls called irresistibly to the lonely boys. The girls, however, never worried Jogman. His life was full when his stomach was full, and the fumes of "cognac" or "whiskey blanc" beckoned him like a siren's smile. Loaded down with his full month's pay and with a twenty-four hour pass in his pocket, he took the shortest path through the forest towards his objective.

The day was clear and almost warm, and the soft breeze droned lazily through the pines. As he reached the edge of the wood he saw before him the sand dunes rolling gently toward the sea. There was a weird fascination about those great hollows and hills of sand. Time and the wind had beaten them so firmly that one might tread upon their crusted surface and scarcely leave a footprint. Craters as large as the Roman Coliseum, surrounded by tufted grass, spread before his gaze, but he tramped

stolidly on, hardly conscious of the lonely beauty of his environment. All that Jogman saw was the top of the large French hospital which marked the edge of the town and stood out clearly against the deep blue of the sea.

When he came to the highest point of the dunes he idly noticed the strange house surmounting it—a dwelling made from an overturned fishing-smack, with door and windows in its side. But a little farther on a habitation, stranger still, by accident attracted his attention. He had lain down for a moment's rest beside some bushes, and on turning his head was surprised to see a small window on a level with his eyes. The house was buried in the sand; its little door, scarce big enough to permit a man's body to pass through, was cunningly hidden by the brush and grass. Whoever lived within was hiding from the world.

Jogman got upon his knees and thrust the brush aside; he pried open the window and peered within. He saw a small room, neatly furnished with bed and rug and chair. A dresser stood againt the wall. An electric light hung from the ceiling, but no wires were visible without. The clothes still lying upon the bed,

the overturned chair and the remains of a lunch upon the table all spoke of a hasty departure. Perhaps it had been the secret home of a German spy. If so, he had decamped some time since.

Dismissing idle speculation, but making a mental note for future reference, Jogman rose and proceeded on his quest. He soon found himself in the streets of that lively little town which has been aptly called the "Monte Carlo" of northern France. Its big gambling "Casinos" had long since been turned to better use, and the beds of wounded soldiers now replaced the gambling tables and *petits chevaux*.

Hurrying through the "Swiss Village" and scarcely taking time to acknowledge the greetings of a Belgian lassie who waved her hand from a shop window as he passed, he entered the *Café Central* and seating himself at one of the little round tables forthwith called for a drink. The barmaid approached him.

"M'sieur veut?" she asked.

"Gimme a glass of Scotch an' soda," Jogman demanded.

"Ees eet wiskie m'sieur desires?" she queried in broken English.

"Yes—whiskey—big glass," said Jogman picturing the size with his two hands.

"Oui, m'sieur."

She filled his glass. He drank it thirstily and called for another. Several more followed their predecessors, and being now comfortably alight he proceeded up street, seeking new worlds to conquer.

The butcher-shop door stood invitingly open. Jogman entered unsteadily; what maudlin idea was fermenting in his brain none but himself might say. The fat butcher, meataxe in hand and pencil behind his ear, approached to take his order.

"Bonjour, monsieur!" he said.

Jogman placed one hand upon the slab, the better to steady the shop which, ignoring the law of gravity, was reeling in most unshoply fashion.

"Bone Dewar, yerself!" he cried, incensed at being addressed in an unintelligible language. "Why th' hell can't ye speak English—like a—white man?"

How often we too have been unreasonably irritated by a foreign and incomprehensible tongue! Jogman's sense of injustice was pre-

ternaturally keen just then. The butcher was a trifle alarmed at his attitude without in the least understanding the cause of complaint.

"Qu'est ce que vous voulez, monsieur?" he demanded nervously.

"Drop that hatchet!" cried his irrational customer, making a step forward. "Drop it, er I'll drop you."

The unfortunate shopkeeper grasped his weapon more firmly still, and stood tremulously on the defensive.

"I'll learn ye to do as ye're told!" shouted Jogman, and seizing a large knife from the slab he rushed at the frightened man who ran screaming into the street, with Jogman in hot pursuit.

The sight of a British soldier brandishing a meat knife and chasing a fellow citizen along the main street was terrifying in the extreme to the peaceful denizens of the town. They ran shrieking for help, bolting into their shops or houses, and barring the doors as though the devil himself with a regiment of imps on horseback were at their heels.

Jogman had cleared the *Rue de Londres* and in the pride of drunken conquest was about

to attack the lesser streets, when the Military Police hove in sight. Much to his annoyance the disturbance interrupted Sergeant Honk in a monosyllabic conversation, which he was holding with a pretty French girl. He humped himself around the corner just in time to see the Sergeant of Police take the belligerent Jogman by the scruff of the neck and the seat of his breeches and heave him into a waiting ambulance.

Honk returned to his Juliette. She had retired to her balcony and refused to descend. Honk lifted his voice appealingly from the street:

"H'I say! Down't ye' be h'afeered—'e won't come back, an' 'e wouldn't 'urt ye when h'I'm 'ere. Come h'on down!"

But Juliette was obdurate, and turned a deaf ear to his entreaties.

"Merci—je ne descends point!" she returned. This was about as intelligible to Honk as Chinese script, but he understood the shake of the head all too well.

"Blast 'im," he grumbled; "them bloomin' blokes what drinks is goin' to 'ave th' 'ole bleedin' town h'about our h'ears. Th' gals

won't look at a decent feller soon." And he forthwith went to drown his sorrow in a mug of beer.

Honk's complaint was soon verified by the facts. Jogman's fame flew from house to house with such infernal rapidity that in less than twenty-four hours the French had learned an English phrase which it cost our lads several months of good conduct to eradicate. It was simple and to the point: "Canadians no good!" For weeks afterward it was shouted at them every time they entered the village. The populace gathered in little groups close to their own homes, while a few of the more timid locked themselves in and shouted through the shutters these same humiliating words.

As Jogman was brought in to the Guard Room, Barker caught a glimpse of him.

"Well," Barker cried in scathing criticism; "the colonel said I wuz th' *first* t' disgrace th' unit. By cripes; I wuzn't th' last. You sure made a good job uv it!"

The colonel was a busy man. His day was as varied and colourful as Job's coat. When it wasn't the vegetable woman who had to be bartered with, it was the iceman who sought, with

true French business acumen, to show him why he wasn't really overcharged, although the bill was three times what the natives had to pay.

"Alvred" had been installed as "Interpreter," and throughout all these ridiculous and unsatisfactory arguments maintained a face as impassive as an English butler at a club dinner.

If the electric light bill to the former tenant was eighty francs per month, and our bill was three hundred francs for the same period, monsieur was assured, on word of honour, that the party of the first part was undercharged, and would forthwith be requested to pay the difference. But one thing was certain; the account against us was *always* correct.

When the colonel had finished these little business details he was hurried away to the operating room. A serious case was awaiting his skilled hand. The wounded man, whose thigh had been shattered with a rifle bullet, was lying upon the table waiting patiently to be etherised. The colonel stepped over to pass a kindly word with him before he was put to sleep.

"And how are you this morning?" he enquired.

"Oh, verra weel in me'self," the poor fellow answered, with a ready smile, "but ma leg is a bit troublesome. I hope ye won't hae t' cut it off, sir?"

"Oh, I think not," the colonel declared reassuringly. "I expect it won't be as serious as that."

"In course, sir, ye'll dae whichever ye think best—but I hae a wife and twa wee bairnies at hame, an' I were thinkin' as how I'd be better able tae dae for them wi' baith ma legs."

"We'll do our very best to save it," the colonel answered.

In a few minutes we were dressed in our white gowns and caps. The X-ray plates were brought in and placed in the illuminator for us to see the exact damage done. The thigh bone was badly splintered for a distance of three inches, and one large piece was torn away. We hoped to be able to put a steel plate upon the bone, and, by screwing it down, draw the fragments together with some fair chance of having them unite. This is a delicate operation, and not only demands considerable skill, but the operating facilities must be perfect.

Fortunately our operating room was ideal,

with its white enamelled walls and marble basins, its rubber covered floor, the most modern of surgical appliances, and, most important of all, a staff of highly trained nurses—it was as ideal as science could make it.

With a bright keen knife the incision was made down to the bone. Alas! It was hopelessly fractured. For a space of several inches there was nothing but tiny fragments, and the one long loose piece we had seen in the X-ray plate. The colonel turned, and said:

"What a pity! The space is so large, the bone will never regenerate. This leg should come off—but I promised to try and save it."

We discussed the situation for a few moments, and finally decided to try an experiment. The loose piece of bone had not yet been thrown away. Might it be used as a splint? We fitted it in between the upper and lower fragment—it was just long enough to be wedged between. We drilled a hole through either end and fastened it firmly with silver wire. Would it grow or decay there? We had grave doubts, and time alone would tell.

Let no one imagine that in the thousands of operations performed at the front surgeons

become careless! Every case is a special one; every "Tommy" the private patient of the Empire. The surgeon's responsibility is as great —and he feels it, too—in that far-away land, as it is at home.

We put the limb in a plaster cast to hold it firm. It had been a clean wound—no infection —we had hopes. Six weeks later the bone had united fairly well, and in three months McPherson was able to walk!

But when this operation was done the colonel's troubles were by no means over for the day. It was ten o'clock, and "office" must be held. This miniature military "Police-Court" sits every morning, with the commanding officer as judge. If the court is small, it is by no means unimportant. Jogman realised this as he stood waiting with the guard and witnesses in the hall, the day after his great "debâcle."

The colonel and adjutant were seated in due state, being in full "service dress," which, as distinct from undress, comprises belt and cap. The sergeant-major, in equally dread attire, ordered the guard and prisoner (the latter being minus both belt and cap—these

appurtenances being denied him) to " 'Shun! —Right turn; quick march!—Halt!—Right turn!" and the whole squad was in line, awaiting "office."

The colonel's face wore a tired and worried expression; his smile had disappeared. The sergeant-major announced:

"Private Jogman, sir!"

The adjutant read the charge sheet. "Number 17462, Private James Jogman, is accused with conduct to the prejudice of good order and military discipline, in that he, on the afternoon of the 21st instant at 4 p.m., in the village of Paris-plage, was disorderly."

The colonel turned to the accused: "Private Jogman, you have heard the charge against you, as read. Are you 'guilty' or 'not guilty'?"

"Not guilty,—sir," Jogman muttered shamefacedly.

Sergeant Honk, as a witness, expressed his surprise by an almost imperceptible lifting of the brush of red hair which did service in lieu of eyebrows. The sergeant-major's lip curled slightly. The colonel's face remained immobile.

"Read the written statement of the Military Police, Mr. Adjutant," he commanded.

The adjutant did so. Each line was correct and convincing. The accused, when asked, declined to express an opinion on it.

"Who is the first witness?" the colonel asked.

"Sergeant Honk, sir."

"Sergeant Honk, what do you know of this case?" demanded the Colonel.

"Sir, h'on the afternoon of the twenty-first, at about four o'clock, h'I was talkin' to a lady h'on the main street of Paree-plaige, when h'I 'eard th' devil of a row—beg pardon, sir, it slipped h'out afore I thought."

"Go on;" said the colonel drily. "I daresay what you state is quite correct."

Thus encouraged, Honk resumed with morose enthusiasm: "H'I says to th' young lady, says h'I, 'Somethin's broke loose 'ere.' The women and men was a-screamin' an' runnin' into their 'ouses. H'I run to the corner as fast as me legs could carry me—" Jogman looked instinctively at Honk's queer limbs, as if he were about to do a mental calculation of his

speed, but was immediately called to attention by the sergeant-major.

"When h'I got there, h'I see th' prisoner goin' like h—— (h'excuse me, sir); well, 'e were goin' some, I tell 'e, with a butcher's knife in 'is mit——"

"Did he appear intoxicated?" the colonel interrupted.

" 'Orrible drunk, h'I calls it, sir—'e were that same, sir; and afore h'I gets to 'im, th' Sergeant o' Police 'ad 'im by th' seat of 'is pants an' 'oisted 'im into the waggin!"

"Have you any questions to put to the witness?" the colonel asked.

"Yes, sir," Jogman replied. "Will Sergeant Honk state, sir, how many beers he had inside him when he thought he seed me?"

The unfortunate Honk turned a deeper hue of red, and shuffled uncomfortably from one foot to the other.

"Your question is not allowed," the colonel replied sternly. "There is plenty of other evidence to show that Sergeant Honk's vision was reasonably accurate."

Other witnesses were called, but the evidence was all equally damning. At last the colonel

asked the prisoner if he had any further defence to offer.

Jogman replied: "Yes, sir. Last month I fell from the boiler and my head has been queer ever since. When I take a drink I don't know what I'm doin'. I don't remember anything about all this."

And the Colonel replied: "This month you fell from the water waggon, and your head is queerer than before. For the crime of which you are guilty you might be shot; but I intend being lenient with you—on one condition—"

Jogman looked up expectantly.

"—and that is—that you sign the pledge that you will not touch another drop of liquor while you are in France."

Honk looked as if he thought this worse than being shot. Jogman glanced furtively at the colonel's face; he had never seen him look so severe before. It was a big sacrifice, but it could not be avoided. He heaved a sigh and replied slowly: "I'll—sign—it, sir!"

"Twenty-eight days First Field Punishment!"

"Right turn, quick march!" cried the sergeant-major; and "office" was over for the

day. Remorseful recollection of the pledge he had just signed clouded Jogman's brow.

"He's gone an' spoiled th' whole war fer me," he grumbled, as they led him away.

CHAPTER X

Reggy might have been a success as Mess Secretary, if it hadn't been for the Camembert cheese. No one could have remained popular long under such a handicap. He had discovered it in some outlandish shop in Paris-plage. The shopkeeper had been ostracised and the health authorities called in.

Some one has said that cheese improves with age. I do not propose to indulge in futile argument with *connoisseurs,* but Reggy's cheese had passed maturity and died an unnatural death. When he produced its green moss-covered remains upon the table, the officers were forthwith divided into two factions—those who liked cheese and those who did not; and the latter class stated their objections with an emphasis and strength which rivalled the Camembert.

Corporal Granger had charge of the Mess. He was a quiet, gentlemanly little chap who said little, thought much, and smoked when he

had a chance. He opened the box before dinner, took a whiff which distorted his face, and silently passed the box to his assistants.

Wilson and René—a French-Canadian lad—wrinkled their noses in unison over it; then Wilson drawled:

"Smells—like a—disease—we uster have—in the ward upstairs."

But René's atavistic sense approved the cheese. "Dat's bon fromage," he declaimed emphatically. "Cheese ain't good until it smells like dat."

"Then folks to home eats a lot what's bad fer them—don't they?" Wilson retorted, with mild satire; "an' them so healthy too!"

René disdained controversy, and with unruffled dignity continued laying the table. During the first few months of our labours he had been orderly to no less a person than the senior major—hence his feeling of superiority. But he and the Second-in-Command hadn't always agreed; the senior major had a *penchant* for collecting excess baggage, and it behooved his unfortunate batman to pack, unpack and handle his ever-increasing number of boxes and bags. By the time we

reached Boulogne these had become a great burden. René looked ruefully down upon it before he started to lift it, piece by piece, into the lorrie.

"Ba gosh!" he exclaimed, in perspiring remonstrance, "I hope de war don' last too long —er it'll take one whole train to move de major's bag-gage!"

René was impressionable and had all the romantic instinct of the true Frenchman. As I watched him decorating the table with flowers —we were to have company that night, and it was to be an event of unusual importance to us—my recollection carried me back to a bleak October night on Salisbury Plain. It was scarcely nine p.m., but I had turned in and lay wrapped in my sleeping bag, reading by the light of a candle propped on a cocoa tin. René had just returned from "three days' leave," having travelled over fifty miles to see a little girl whose face had haunted him for weeks. He was flushed with excitement and had to unburden his heart to some one. He stepped into my tent for a moment, the rain running off his cap and coat in little rivulets onto the floor.

"I'm afraid you're in love, René," I teased,

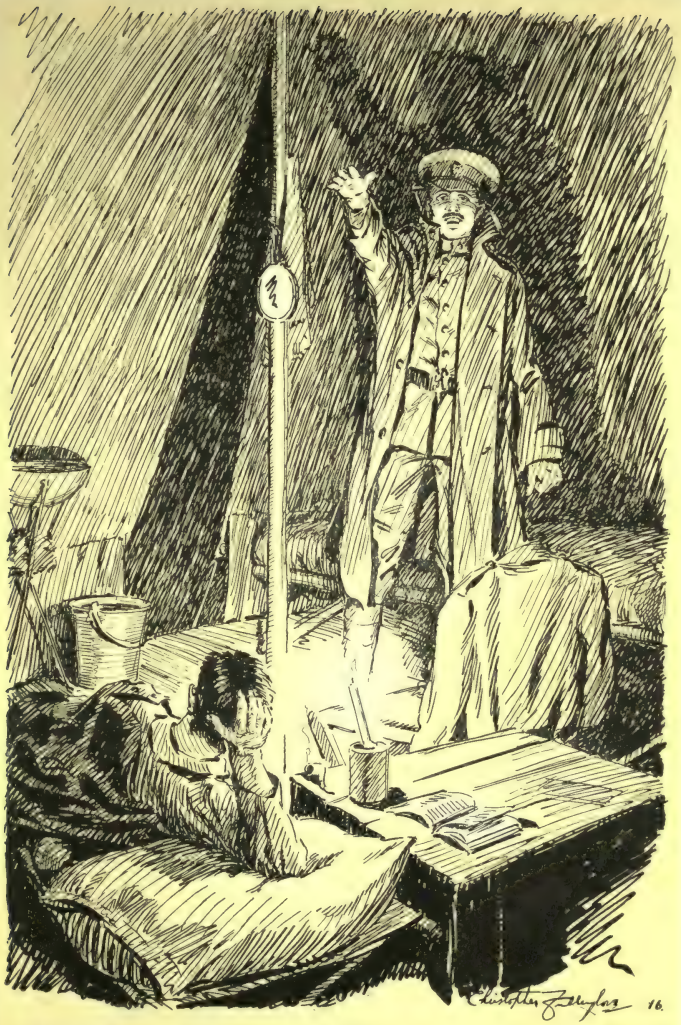
after he had given me a glowing account of his trip.

"I t'ink dat's right," he exclaimed, with sparkling eyes. "Why, dat's de purtiest gal what I ever see. Dose arms of hers! Gee, dere ain't lilies so white like dat, an' de roses of her cheeks!—every time I meet her, I see her like more kinds of flowers!"

"But you'll see another bud next week, René," I interjected, "and forget all about this dainty little flower."

"Me forget? Non!" he declared, with conviction—and then a wistful look crept into his big brown eyes. He sat upon the edge of Reggy's cot opposite and reminiscently smoothed the hair off his brow before he continued:

"Sometime wen you're up de Gat'-ineau at home, an' de lumbermen free de logs in de riviere, you see dem float so peaceful down de stream. De water is run so slow an' quiet you don' see no movement dere; but bimeby de riviere go lil' faster, de ripples wash de banks, de logs move swifter an' more swift until dey come above de falls—dey fall, crash, boom! One gets stuck, annuder an' annuder; dey



RENÉ HAD RISEN IN THE EXCITEMENT OF HIS DESCRIPTION

jam—dey pile up higher an' more high—more hun'reds of logs come down, an' jam an' jam. De water can't pass—it overflow de bank an' spread out in a great lake over de fields."

René had risen in the excitement of his description. The candle light shone faintly upon his broad shoulders and handsome, inspired face. His right arm was extended in harmony with the vehemence of his description. He continued more softly:

"Dat riviere is me; de falls is my lil' gal at de turnin'-point of my life, an' de great lake is my love which has burst over de fields of my fancy an' freshes all de dry places. I can't tell you how I love dat gal—sometimes I tink—maybe—I marry her some day."

At this juncture the senior major had thrust his head inside the tent.

"René," he called sternly, "get back to your work! Wash my rubber boots and keep an eye on the tent 'til I return."

And poor René, thus rudely brought to earth, had crept silently away.

At seven-thirty p.m., the shrill call of the bugle sounded "Officers' Mess":

"The officers' wives get pudding and pies,
The soldiers' wives get skilly—"

It is the one call which every officer, senior or junior, knows by heart, and answers promptly.

A mess dinner is a parade, and is conducted with all the pomp and dignity peculiar to a Chinese wedding. Woe betide the untrained "sub" who dares seat himself before the Commanding Officer has taken his place at the centre of the table! For the first time since our arrival in France, we were to be honoured with the presence of several ladies, and the whole mess was in a state of excitement compatible with the seriousness of such an occasion. It was so long since any of us had dined under the charming, but restraining, influence of the fair sex that, as Reggy afterward remarked, he was in a condition bordering on nervous prostration lest he forget to eat the ice cream with his fork, or, worse still, "butter" his bread with *paté de fois gras.*

Reggy had other worries on his mind as well. He had been taken aside early, and solemnly warned that if he, his heirs, executors or assigns, dared to bring forth upon the table so

much as a smell of his ill-favoured cheese, he would be led out upon the sand dunes at early dawn and shot. This precaution having been duly taken, he was permitted to retire to the pantry with Fraser and Corporal Granger, and amuse himself making thirty Bronx cocktails for our express delectation. Promptly, as the last note of the bugle died away, the colonel and matron ushered our fair guests into the Mess Room.

Had our long separation from the beautiful women of Canada whetted our sense of appreciation? Or was it some dim recollection of an almost-forgotten social world which stimulated our imagination? Certainly no more exquisite representatives of the, to us, long-lost tribe of lovely women ever graced a Mess Room in France!

After the customary introductions had taken place, the twenty-five officers who now comprised our Mess distributed themselves in various awkward positions about the chairs of the five ladies—all the rest of our chairs were at the table—each trying vainly to give himself that appearance of graceful ease which indi-

cates that the entertainment of *grandes dames* is our chief sport in Canada.

What a dreadful encumbrance one's hands are on such an occasion! A military uniform does not take kindly to having its wearer's hands thrust deeply into his breeches pockets, and, as every one knows, this is the only way to feel at ease when addressing a lady in her evening gown—if you fold your hands unostentatiously behind your back, it hampers your powers of repartee.

Lady Danby, who conducted a Red Cross Hospital in a near-by town, appreciated our embarrassment, and did her best to make us feel at home.

"What a delightful Mess Room!" she exclaimed, as her tall, lithesome figure sank into an arm chair. "It must be so restful and refreshing after those dreadful operations!"

"Captain Reggy finds it very restful indeed," Burnham volunteered mischievously; "he spends a great deal of his time here—mixing drinks."

"Ah!—and he does them so very well too," exclaimed Madame Cuillard, with a flash of her beautiful dark eyes toward the hero of the

moment, and lifting her glass to him in gracious compliment. "He is a man after my own heart."

"Madam, you flatter me," Reggy murmured, with a low bow, "and yet I fear I am not the first who has been 'after' such a kindly heart?"

"Nor you shall not be the last, I hope," the little widow returned, with a rippling laugh. "Still, 'Weak heart never won'—ah, non—I am forgetting my English—let it pass. A heart is so easy to be lost in France—you must be careful."

Fraser's Gibsonian figure towered above the others as he and Father Bonsecour and the senior major stood chatting with two Canadian guests. The girls made a pretty contrast, petite, dainty and vivacious; the one with blue-black hair and large soft brown eyes, the other fair as an angel, with hair of finely spun gold and eyes as blue as the sea over the dunes.

"May I take your glasses?" Fraser queried.

"Thank you, by all means," said the little brunette smilingly. "There's nothing I regret more than an empty glass or a flower that is dead."

"The former leaves little to hope, and the

latter hopes little to leaf," asserted the senior major sententiously, animated by the beauty of our guests.

"What a dreadful pun, Major Baldwin!" cried the pretty blonde. "You deserve five days C. B.!"

"Thank Heaven," laughed the major, "we don't always get our deserts! We incorrigibles may still, for a moment

" 'Take the cash and let the credit go,
Nor heed the rumble of the distant drum'!"

But the Colonel interrupted these delightful inanities by offering his arm to Lady Danby and showing her to the seat of honour on his right. The other ladies were distributed as impartially as was possible amongst the remaining twenty-four of us. We stood for a moment with bowed heads while our chaplain repeated that concise but effective military grace:

"For what we are about to receive, thank God!" and then we took our seats.

The dinner was progressing splendidly. Wilson hadn't spilled the soup; René hadn't

tripped over the rug; course after course had proceeded under Granger's worried eye with daintiness and despatch. The *sole meuniere* was done to a turn, the roast pheasant and asparagus had been voted superb, and the ice-cold salad a refreshing interlude. Even the plum pudding, with its flaming sauce, had been transported without accident to the guests, when Reggy beckoned with a motion of the head to Granger, and whispered something in his ear.

Granger was the best lad in the world when he wasn't disturbed, but if he became excited anything might happen. The order was transmitted to René, and in a moment the murder was out. Whether through misunderstanding, or René's secret pride in its possession, Reggy's cheese had been excavated, and before it was possible to interfere, its carcase was upon the table!

The scent of hyacinth and lilies-of-the-valley faded on the instant; the delicate charm of *poudre de riz* was obliterated and all the delicious odours of the meal were at once submerged in that wonderful, pungent, all-embracing emanation from the cheese.

The colonel turned first red, then pale. He cast an appealing glance at Reggy—it was too late. The rest of us glared surreptitiously and silently at the culprit. An inspiration seized him. Unobserved, he signalled the mess president, who rose to his feet on the instant.

"Mr. Vice—The King!" he commanded.

"Ladies and gentlemen—The King!" came the formal but inspiring reply.

The cheese was forgotten. We were upon our feet, and lifting our glasses we drank to our sovereign. Cigars and cigarettes were passed around, and we waited patiently until the colonel lighted his cigar—for no one smokes at mess until the O. C. has set the example, or given his permission. The offending element had been quickly but quietly removed from the table, and once more peace and happiness prevailed.

But Reggy's fate as Mess Secretary was sealed!

CHAPTER XI

THE first line of a certain popular song emphasises a bold and truthful platitude, namely: "The World's growing older each day." The incontrovertible fact is plumped unexpectedly before us, and blocks our only exit down the passage of argument. If it had read: "The World's growing *smaller* each day," we might have run to our text-book of Elementary Physics, and, placing a stubby but argumentative forefinger on the Law of the Indestructibility of Matter, have proved it a falsehood of the Nth. degree. But, of course, this must all have happened before the War. Every one knows now—every Tommy can tell you—that the world is really and truly smaller; for, if not, how is it he meets Bill, or Jake, or Harry on the streets of *Poperinghe* or *Dickibusch?* He knows instinctively that the world is shrinking, and Halifax and Vancouver may be found any time jumbled together in a little Belgian village on the wrong side of the Atlantic.

I hadn't seen Jack Wellcombe for twenty-five years—we had been school chums together—and his name had almost faded from the pages of my mind; so that on entering the hospital the morning after Reggy's last dinner, I received a slight shock as I lifted a new chart from the table and saw this name staring up at me:

"Captain J. Wellcombe. Royal Army Medical Corps."

Had the world really become so small? Could a quarter century be bridged in an instant? I seemed to see the little old stone schoolhouse once again; its low-ceilinged room, the big box-stove, the well-hacked seats, and the rows of little boys and girls bowed over their greasy slates. The scent of midday lunches stowed away floated back to me in memory's dream, and the haw-tree brushed its leaves against the window pane. I saw Jack as he was then, with frank blue eyes and waving golden hair—courteous, genial and big-hearted, beloved by all; and I wondered as I stood there if by any chance this might be he.

The nursing sister awoke me from this reverie: "He arrived in the early morning," she volunteered, "but as he was not seriously hurt I didn't call you, and dressed the wound myself."

It was with a feeling of nervous tension and expectancy that I followed her down the hall to his room and entered. Alas! the world is full of disappointments. It was not Jack—this dignified man with the touch of grey about the temples—but still the resemblance grew stronger, the kindly blue eyes, the same winsome smile—I wondered still.

We passed the customary greetings and chatted commonplaces for a few moments, and all the time his face wore an expression of puzzled enquiry, as if he too were trying to recall some faint memory from the past. At last I blurted out:

"Are you by any chance related to Jack Wellcombe, of K——?"

"A very close relation," he returned laughingly. "I am his dearest friend; in fact—himself. And you—you are Mac—dear old Mac!" he cried, stretching out both hands to me in his

impetuous, warm-hearted way. I could have hugged him, I was so glad to see him!

"What a queer game is Life!" he exclaimed a moment later. "For years you and I have been shaken about, with many a jolt, in the dice-box of the world, and now, like two Jacks, we are once more tossed together upon the Table of Fate!"

While we were chatting over old times, the nurse unwound his bandages.

"I hope it doesn't hurt too much?" I asked him, as I examined his wound preparatory to dressing it.

"It's a mere scratch," he returned lightly; "a piece of shrapnel through the flesh of the thigh; but the surgeon at the Field Ambulance thought I should come back to hospital for a week or two. Things are rather noisy around Ypres."

"But what possessed you to join the R. A. M. C.?" I enquired. "You should be with the Canadians."

He laughed. "Oh, you chaps were too long in coming over. I'd have lost three whole months of the war. I was in England when it

broke out, and came over with the First Expeditionary Force."

"You were in the retreat from Mons, then!" I exclaimed in envious admiration.

"Every foot of it," he replied. "That *was* a fight, you may well believe. But the Huns didn't have it all their own way. I saw a strange scrap one day between a French and a German battalion. The Huns sprang suddenly out of an ambush and were upon the French with the bayonet before you could catch your breath. Taken by surprise, the 'poilus' ran for all they were worth for about a quarter of a mile —and they are some sprinters too—the Huns following them, shouting like demons. Suddenly the French stopped—they must have been running to get their second wind—wheeled about, and with fixed bayonets charged back like a streak of forked lightning through the Germans. You never saw such a surprised and rattled bunch of Huns since you were born. If it hadn't been so awful I could have shrieked with laughter. But the French weren't satisfied with going through them once; they turned about and came back at them again, like a regiment of cavalry. The Huns seemed stupefied

with amazement and terror; they fought like men in a daze, and very few ever got back to tell the story of the 'cowardly French who ran away'!"

"We, too, have underestimated the French, I'm afraid," I said. "We are beginning to realise their possibilities as a fighting force, and the Germans aren't yet awake to their strength and determination."

"They fought well at the battle of the Marne," Jack remarked. "It makes me smile still as I picture a fat little French officer with drawn sword—God only knows what he intended doing with it—who stood behind a hay-stack waving to his men to come on. He was absolutely fearless. Again and again he charged up that steep hill with the men, and when they couldn't make it, back he would come to hide behind his hay-stack and wait until he could induce them to try it again. About the fifth attack they succeeded and went on over the hill."

I questioned him about the battle of Ypres. (This, of course, was the first battle of Ypres —not that in which the Canadians distinguished themselves.)

"It was fast work at 'Wipers,'" he said, "with shells falling into the town like a thousand roaring devils. They dropped one into the signaller's billet. It tore a hole in the side of the building large enough to march an elephant through, and killed every mother's son of them. A 'Jack Johnson' came through the roof of our hospital and dropped into the ward —exit ward! There wasn't a bed left standing. Luckily we had removed most of the patients into the cellar—but those who were left are still there, buried in the ruins."

"The usual German respect for the Red Cross!" I commented bitterly.

"The flag makes a good mark for their artillery," he returned, with a smile; "they always look for us."

"You've had many narrow squeaks, I presume?"

He laughed merrily. "So narrow that if I had had a big stomach it might have been whittled down to sylph-like proportions. I was standing one day close to a dug-out, talking to two brother officers. The 'Whizz-Bangs' and 'Coal Boxes' were sizzling over from time to time, but not especially close. An old friend of

mine" (Jack always had an "old friend" everywhere!) "stuck his head out of the dug-out and shouted up to me:

" 'Drop in and have a drink, Jack—the water's fine!'

"I told him I was never thirsty in the mornings. He looked surprised, but called back again:

" 'If you'll do me the honour to descend, I'll make you a fine long John Collins!'

" 'Well, well,' I said, 'as you're so kind and such a persistent beggar, I'll humour you.' The other two officers said they wouldn't go in, and so I climbed down into his dug-out and sat down.

"Just as I did so a big shell came—bang!—right where I had been standing. We sprang to our feet and looked out—the poor chaps I had just left had been literally blown to pieces!"

He lay pensively silent for a moment or two, and there was a suspicious glint of moisture in his eyes as he turned his face toward the wall. Then he turned on his side once more, and smiling brightly up at me, murmured:

"It's been a great lesson to me!"

"In what way?" I queried.

"Never to refuse a drink!"

It will take more than a world's war to depress Jack. His cork-like spirit will always make him pop up serene to the surface of the whirlpool of life.

"You know the Guild Hall at Wipers?" he exclaimed a moment later.

"No; I haven't been to the actual firing line yet," I returned. "The only time we realise there is a war back here is when the trains of wounded come in; or, on a stormy night, when the wind blows fiercely from the trenches, and the boom of the great guns is driven here intermittently with the gusts."

"As soon as I can stand upon this peg of mine, you and the colonel and I will motor up and see it all," he declared, with assurance.

"Agreed!" I cried. "You may now feel confident of a speedy recovery. But tell me more about 'Wipers.' "

He raised himself on one elbow, and commenced reminiscently: "Our dear old colonel was billeted in the tenement row which used to be in the square of Ypres, close to the Guild

Hall. We had been shelled out of place after place, but for several days lately Fritzie had left us in peace. It was too good to last long. One night they started chucking big shells into the cathedral and what was left of the square. I counted fifty-seven falling over and around the colonel's billet. I began to suspect the place. Taken as an exhibition of fire-works, it was a success, but as a health resort it had defects.

"It was about eleven o'clock, and some of the houses in the row had already been hit. Ye gods! Vesuvius in its balmiest days was like a Chinese lantern to this—for a second, in a lull, you would hear the whine of a big shell; then, crash! it went into a building, and shell and house went up together in one frightful smash-up.

"I went over to wake the old boy, as he showed no symptoms of having been disturbed. It was useless to rap—there was such an infernal racket with shells bursting, roofs toppling in and walls falling out. I stumbled up the dark stairs to his room. He was sound asleep—think of it! I spoke to him, but he

"HOW CAN YOU?" SHE CRIED INVOLUNTARILY, "HOW CAN A LITTLE LAD LIKE YOU BEAR TO KILL MEN WITH A BAYONET?"

didn't wake; so I shook him gently by the shoulder and he opened his eyes.

" 'Hello, Wellcombe!' he growled, in his rough but genial way. 'What the devil brings you prowling around at this time of night?'

"I told him that I thought the billet was becoming a trifle unsafe, as some of the other houses in the row had already been hit.

" 'Is that all you came to tell me?' he asked, with indifference.

"I said it seemed sufficient to me, and told him we had no wish to lose him.

" 'Well, well,' he came back at me, but not unkindly, 'and you woke me out of a sound sleep to tell me this! Go and get me a drink and then run along like a good fellow and go to bed.'

"And after the old chap had his drink he thanked me, turned over in bed, and I believe was sound asleep again before I got out of the house—while a continual hell of fire and shells tore the guts out of the town about him! When I went back in the morning, there was only one house left standing in that row—the colonel's. The others were a crumpled mess of bricks and mortar!"

I chatted with him as long as I could, and then, telling him I would drop in later in the day, continued my rounds on the wards.

As we entered one of the smaller rooms, I noticed a bright-eyed, red-cheeked Scotch lad, not more than seventeen years of age, seated upon his cot. He was chatting animatedly with several others, but sprang to attention as we approached. The nurse unwound the bandages and showed me his wound—a bayonet cut across the palm. We had already heard from his comrades that this slip of a boy, with the smiling eyes and ringing laugh, was one of the finest bayonet fighters in his battalion, and had to his credit a string of German scalps that would make a Pawnee Chief green with envy. His wound was the result of grasping his opponent's bayonet during one of these fights.

The nurse looked up at the boyish face—the big blue eyes and laughing mouth—he did seem such a child!

"How *can* you," she cried involuntarily; "how *can* a little lad like you bear to kill men with a bayonet?"

His lips parted over his even white teeth in a broader smile than ever, but he flushed deeply

as he exclaimed: "Oh, ma'm, when ye're in a charge an' ye see them steekin' yer best chums —ye go fair mad—everything turns red afore ye, an' ye could kill the whole bleedin' lot!"

"Bravo!" cried the little nurse enthusiastically, clapping her hands—she had been carried away, as I admit I too was, by his sincerity and vehemence. "May you live long and grow to be a great man, as you deserve!"

After dressing his hand and the wounds of the others, we passed on into the next room, where a poor fellow, shot through the hip, lay suffering in heroic silence.

It required three of us to do his dressing, because, on account of the peculiar position of the wound, he had to be turned upon his side each time, and with a fractured hip this was a process of great difficulty. This wonderful war has produced its many heroes, but when the great Recorder above opens His book at doomsday, He will find the name of William Hoare written large on the pages of valour.

Throughout the painful dressing Nursing Sister Dolly stood at his head, and, placing her strong little arms about his great shoulders would tell him to lift himself by her; and

Hoare would gratefully lock his hands behind her neck and help to raise himself. What he suffered, God only knows! He made no sign of complaint, but gritted his teeth together like a vise and never spoke until the operation was over. Beads of sweat stood upon his brow, and his face was pale, but no groan had escaped.

"Have a little brandy, Hoare," Sister Dolly coaxed; "it'll do you good—you look so white." Tears of sympathy stood in her eyes, but Hoare smiled bravely up at her and said simply:

"Thank you—it would be welcome."

"You are a splendid soldier, Hoare," I remarked, as Sister Dolly hurried away for the stimulant.

"I'm not really a soldier, sir. I've only been a few months in the ranks," he answered. "I'm a 'bus driver in London."

I thought to myself: "A 'bus driver in London—but a hero of heroes in France!"

He raised his head as Sister Dolly held the glass gently to his lips. "You are very kind," he murmured gratefully. "I'm a deal of trouble to you."

The little sister smiled sadly and shook her

head, then without a word dashed from the room.

"I'd have burst out crying—if I'd stayed another minute," she exclaimed impetuously, when I met her a moment later in the hall. "I'm a fool, I know—I'm too chicken-hearted to be a nurse."

"You're a real woman," I ejaculated in genuine admiration; "the world is the better because you were born!"

We then visited the large ward. There were forty patients in it, most of them looking as jolly as if hospital life were one of the most amusing experiences in the world. Some were reading, some playing cribbage, some of those with minor wounds were helping about the ward, and all were smoking.

But one, who had just arrived, looked dangerously ill. We approached his bed, his greenish pallor was alarming. I felt for his pulse—it had disappeared. We gave him a hypodermic at once to stimulate him, but we knew all too well he was far beyond human aid. He smiled slightly as I spoke to him. His mind was clear, with that preternatural clearness which heralds death. I sat down beside his

bed—it was screened off from the others—and took his hand.

"Have you any friends to whom you wish to send a message?" I asked him gently.

"Why, doctor," he enquired, with a keenness of perception that was embarrassing, and looking up at me with a glance of slight surprise, "do you think I am going to die?"

"You are very ill indeed," I replied hesitatingly, "and I think it would be well, if there is some one in whom you are specially interested, that you should write at once."

He smiled faintly again as he looked me in the eye and answered: "There is only one person in the world who concerns me deeply—my mother;" he turned his head away an instant, "I have already written her. How long do you think I have to live?"

Even when one can answer, this is always the most awkward question in the world. No one ever gets accustomed to pronouncing a death sentence. I shook my head sadly and replied: "I cannot tell you positively—but I fear you have only a few hours more."

"Well, well," he said somewhat indifferently, and then his voice became more interested. He

turned back and asked suddenly: "By the way, will you grant me a favour?"

"I assured him I would do anything in my power; but I was totally unprepared for his request. He spoke eagerly:

"Then, may I have a bowl of rice pudding?"

His *sang-froid* startled me beyond speech. Death to him was a matter of small moment—but hunger was serious. We got him his pudding. He ate it with relish, and two hours later, with a cigarette between his lips, his brave eyes closed forever.

There was a bustle in the hospital that afternoon. We had orders to send two hundred patients to England. The boys were in a state of happy excitement; those who could walk hurrying down to the pack-stores and returning with all sorts of wrinkled tunics and breeches, and with old boots and caps. Sometimes an Irishman secured a kilt, and a "kiltie," much to his annoyance, was obliged to wear breeches. For when men from hospital were returning to England, although all their clothes were sterilised, no special effort was made in those days to return them their own. New clothes were issued at home. Those pa-

tients who were unable to get up were dressed in bed, their heads were encased in woollen toques, big thick bed-socks were drawn over their feet to keep them warm, and they were rolled in blankets and placed in the hall on stretchers, ready to depart.

The nurses had slaved for hours. Every patient had been carefully bathed, his hands and face were spotlessly clean, his wounds were freshly dressed and he was wrapped up so snugly that the loving eye of a mother could have found no fault.

The ambulances were at the door once more —but on a different mission this time—and the boys, all smiles and chatter, were carried out upon their stretchers or clambered gleefully down the stairs. Nurses, officers and men were at the door saying good-bye to their patients. Murmured words of thanks or gratitude on the one hand, and warmest well wishes on the other were exchanged, and at last, with much waving of caps and handkerchiefs, the convoy of ambulances started for the steamer at Boulogne, carrying the happy, care-free loads of boys another stage toward home, or, in Tommy's own vernacular—toward "Blighty."

CHAPTER XII

It was a wild fight the day the Germans broke through at Givenchy; and the *Bosches* were wilder still when, finding themselves in the town, they were in considerable doubt what to do with it. Of course it would have been perfectly all right if the rest of their corps had followed on and backed up the intrepid stormers. But the enemy had reckoned without his host, and Tommy decided that such visitors should be given a warm reception. In fact, they went so far in their efforts at hospitality that they entirely surrounded their guests and closed the breech behind them, in order that they might receive no "draft" from the rear.

Having thus graciously encompassed them, Tommy proceeded to kill them with kindness, rifles, bayonets and hand grenades. The Germans, greatly bewildered by this flattering reception, would fain have rested on the laurels already won. Tommy, however, insisted on

entertaining them still further, and at last, despairing of ever satisfying such a busy host, the visitors threw down their arms and capitulated.

When we opened the doors of the Ambulance Train at Etaples and, instead of the customary khaki, saw the drab coats and the red-banded skull caps, we were almost as surprised as the Germans had been the day before.

They were a sorry-looking lot. Dazed and bewildered by their astonishing defeat, they looked like men still under the influence of a narcotic. As they got slowly down from the coaches, their heads or arms in bandages, they looked sick—very sick indeed; but it was not so much with an illness of the body as an illness of the mind. They stood together, silent and sullen, seeming to expect ill-treatment at our hands.

There is so little of the true "sport" in the German composition that they cannot understand that to the British war is still a game and, when the contest is over, ill-feeling ceases. We bore no more enmity toward these hapless victims of a malevolent militarism than as if they had been helpless waifs cast upon our charity.

GERMAN WOUNDED

This is not a matter for self-praise; it is the inevitable result of a wholesome and broad-minded upbringing. God knows these defeated men looked sufficiently depressed and mean without our adding to their brimming cup of sorrow!

Waiving prejudice for the moment and looking at them with an impartial eye, what did we see? Stripped of their accoutrements of war, they looked quiet and inoffensive enough, but the closely shaven heads gave them the appearance of criminals. In spite of this handicap some looked to be decent, reliable chaps, not so very different from our own men. Some were dark and short of stature; some were tall, broad-shouldered and strong. Some had the fair hair and blue eyes which we always associate with the Saxon. But there were those too whose low brows, irregular features and cruel eyes indicated an unmistakable moral degeneracy which boded no one good.

One, a corporal, who spoke English and acted as interpreter for his fellows, presented a countenance of such striking malignancy and low cunning that the mere contemplation of his ugly features—the long nose, receding fore-

head and sneaky grey eyes—impressed one with an uneasy feeling that no dastardly deed would be beneath him. Upon request, he herded his companions into the ambulances, and as they were, with a few exceptions, but slightly wounded, a strong guard was sent to the hospital with them to see that they should do no mischief nor attempt to escape upon the way.

When they arrived at the hospital and were drawn up in line in the admittance hall, it was perhaps a pardonable curiosity which prompted the orderlies to crowd around and get a glimpse of the first German prisoners they had ever seen. The Bosche corporal took his stand beside the registrar's desk and called out, in English, the names, numbers and regiments of each of the prisoners. Amongst them were Prussians, Bavarians and German Poles. It is difficult to say how this medley of nationalities came to be together.

Sergeant Honk was in the forefront among the orderlies, and perhaps that was the reason he was drawn still further into the limelight. For suddenly a prisoner, putting his hand into the pocket of his coat, drew forth a hand grenade, and thrust it at him. Honk was startled,

and, jerking his half-extended hand away with great expedition, backed hastily from the evil-looking bomb.

" 'Ere you!" he gasped excitedly, "wot the dooce are ye h'up to now?"

"Ein 'souvenir' für Ihnen," said the German, astonished at Honk's precipitate retreat. Honk understood only the one word, but that was enough.

"H'I down't want any damn dangerous souvenir like that!" he returned wrathfully. "Put it h'on the tyble!"

The German, gathering his meaning from his actions rather than Honk's words, did as he was bidden, and stepped back into line.

"The bleedin' fool might 'a' blowed h'up the 'ole hospital," he declaimed peevishly to his companions, "whippin' out 'is blimed h'infernal machine like that; blessed if h'I wouldn't 'a' put 'im in the clink fer h'it."

Burnham now ordered our men to get about their business and proceeded with the allotment of beds for the prisoners. A slight difficulty arose at this point, as to their disposal. The colonel had decided to put them all in one ward; but, as we had no armed guard, we

thought they would be safer if distributed in the several rooms. A number of them were so slightly wounded that, if segregated in one room, they might easily concoct schemes for escape or even offence. At the same time, by decentralising them, they would not only be under surveillance by the ward orderlies, but by the British Tommies as well, and there would be little opportunity for collusion. This plan was finally adopted. The Prussians fell to Reggy's lot; the Bavarians to mine, and the balance were divided amongst the different wards.

The next morning Reggy, who had studied in Berlin and spoke excellent German, when making his rounds approached the bed of a tall, fair-haired prisoner, whose steely blue eyes contained no hint of welcome, and who, in spite of his good treatment, was still openly suspicious of us.

After bidding him *guten Morgen* and dressing his wound—which was in the place we would have liked to see all Germans "get it," viz.: the neck, Reggy enquired:

"What do you think of the war? Do you still think you are going to win?"

The Prussian looked up with a half smile and the suspicion of a sneer curled his lip. "Is there any doubt about it?" he returned.

"There should be considerable doubt in your minds," Reggy answered warmly.

"We shall win," the prisoner said, with imperturbable coolness and assurance; "the war has only commenced, as far as we are concerned."

"But you will be starved out, if you're not beaten otherwise," Reggy continued.

The shortage of food in Germany was one of our early delusions about the war. The Prussian laughed amusedly—not by any means a pleasant laugh.

"If we do not grow a grain," he replied scornfully, "we have sufficient food stored away to last us for three years. For the past ten years every city in Germany has kept a three-year supply stored, and only the oldest crop has been used annually." An illuminating confession!

"But you will run short of men," Reggy persisted.

His patient smiled again at our innocence. "We have ten million trained soldiers in re-

serve, who have not yet been called up," he answered calmly.

We were not prepared at the time to dispute the veracity of these statements, although later events seem to have corroborated them.

There was a grim heroism about this cold-blooded man, for when he was placed upon the operating table, although he must have suffered greatly while the deeply embedded bullet was being extracted under cocaine, he permitted no groan or complaint to escape his lips. However much we may hate the Prussians, or loathe their materialistic and unsentimental attitude toward their fellow human beings, if this man was a sample, they are as well prepared to suffer as to inflict pain. Proud, disdainful and bitter, one could not help but feel that he hated us so thoroughly that should the opportunity have occurred, he would have killed his attendants without a qualm of conscience.

The contrast between this prisoner's mental attitude and that of one of my Bavarian patients was striking. The latter had had his left arm cruelly shattered, and on dressing it I discovered a large ragged wound above the elbow.

He spoke no English, so that I was obliged to use my indifferent German.

"Wie geht es dieser Morgen?" I asked him.

"Ganz gut," he replied, as he looked up with a grateful smile at hearing his native tongue. He continued in German: "The nurses have been very good to me, but my arm pains greatly."

We carried on a more or less desultory conversation while the dressing was proceeding, but, by dint of getting him to speak slowly, I managed to understand him fairly well. Wishing to estimate his frame of mind as compared with the Prussian, I remarked:

"I presume you feel badly over being taken prisoner?"

"No," he replied slowly; "I am glad. To us Germans this war means a fight to the death; there are only two ways of escape: being crippled for life—or this. You will wonder at my confessing that I am glad, but I have left behind me in Heidelberg all that I love best on earth—my wife and two little children——" His voice choked and tears came into his eyes, but after a moment he sighed: "God knows

whether I shall ever see them again—for me the war is over—it is just as well."

Do you blame one for forgetting that this man was an enemy? "One touch of sympathy" in spite of the horrors of war, still "makes the whole world kin." We may hate the Germans *en masse,* but heart cannot help going out to heart, and in the weeks that followed I confess, without apology, that I learned to look upon this man as a friend.

It was about four o'clock the following afternoon that Wilson approached me, and, pulling himself up to attention, said:

"Th' nurse on Saskatchewan ward, zur, ses as that German corporal ain't had any feed t'day."

"Why not? I asked him.

"Dunno, zur, but he ain't, an' she's ast me to bring th' Orderly Officer to see him."

We had laid it down as a principle that German patients, in every instance, were to be treated the same as our own Tommies, so that it was annoying to hear that one of our men had been guilty of Hun tactics. Although I despised this corporal more than any of the others, neglect, even of him, could not be coun-

tenanced in a hospital. I hastened up the stairs to investigate. The nurse corroborated Wilson's statement. The German had complained to her that he had had only a light breakfast and no dinner, although the other men in his room had received theirs.

I called the ward orderly. "Why did you not give this man his dinner?" I asked him sternly.

"The meat was all gone when I went for it, sir," he replied, without looking me in the eye, "but I gave him a dish of custard."

Evidently the orderly had made up his mind to punish the Bosche, and while I sympathised secretly with his antipathy to the individual, I couldn't condone his disobedience or the principle.

"Come with me," I commanded, "and I'll ask him myself."

We entered a room which contained only three beds. In the farthest was a burly giant of a Highlander, in the middle the wretched German corporal, and nearest to us was a Munsterite of prodigious muscle and who was but slightly wounded in the leg.

I asked the German in English, which I well

knew he understood, whether he had received his dinner or not. He affected not to understand me, and answered in German. As my German is not as fluent as my French, and I knew that he also spoke this language and might have some secret reason for not wishing to speak English, I tried him in French. He pretended not to understand this either. My opinion of him sank even lower. I tried him then in German, and he replied quite readily in his own tongue.

"I did not have any meat, but I was given a dish of pudding."

"Did you eat it?" I asked him.

"I had no chance to do so," he answered.

"Why not?" I queried.

He turned his head slowly and looked first at the big Highlander and then at the equally big Munsterite, and shook his head as he replied: "I don't know."

There was some mystery here, and not such a deep one that it couldn't be unravelled. I asked the Munsterite:

"Did you eat this man's pudding?"

"No, sir," he answered readily, but with a

queer smile. The Highlander also answered in the negative. There was still a mystery.

"Do you *know* this German?" I asked the man from Munster and whose bed was nearest.

"Do I know him, sir!" he replied, with a significant look directed at his enemy. "I've seen that swine several times. He's a sniper, and used to go about with another tall swine who wore glasses. We never could kill the blighter, but he picked off three of our officers and wounded a fourth. Do I know him, sir?—my eye!"

Under the circumstances I couldn't reproach him. I felt morally certain he had stolen the German's pudding, as he could easily have reached it from his bed. I didn't care to probe the matter further, but warned him that such a breach of discipline must not occur again. After reprimanding the orderly also for his negligence—more from a sense of duty than desire, I admit—I ordered that some food be brought up at once, and saw that it reached its destination.

We could not have punished the German worse than to leave him in that room. One could easily understand why he pretended

not to understand English, for I am sure the remarks which passed across his bed in the days he was there made his ears tingle and his miserable flesh creep.

After I had retired that night, Tim came up as usual to see that I was comfortable. Sometimes, when I was in the humour, I told him a story; not so much with the idea of enlightening him as to hear his comments as I proceeded and from which I gained much amusement.

"Did you ever hear of the mammoth whose carcase they found in Siberia, Tim?" I asked him.

"Wot's a mammoth, Maje?" he queried, as he seated himself upon my box and, crossing his legs, prepared to listen.

"A mammoth, Tim," I replied, "is an extinct animal, similar to the elephant, but which grew to tremendous size."

"How big?" he enquired tentatively—his head on one side as usual.

"Oh, taller than this house, Tim; often much taller. His teeth were nearly as big as a hat box, and his leg bones almost as big around as your waist."

"Go on—go on, I'm a-listenin'," he growled dubiously.

"Well, this mammoth had tumbled over a cliff in the mountains of Siberia, thousands of years ago, and falling upon a glacier was frozen solidly in the ice, and, as it never melted, his body didn't decay. A few years ago they discovered it, and dug it out practically intact."

Tim's eyes were wide, and his mouth had fallen open during this description.

"Wot more?" he demanded quizzically.

"Only this," I continued, "that everything had been so well preserved by the ice that even the wisp of hay was still in his mouth."

"Dat'll do—dat'll do," he cried, as he rose abruptly to his feet. "Don' tell me no more. I sits here like a big gawk listenin' to dat story wit' me mout' open an' takin' it all in like a dam' fool. An' I stood fer it all, too," he continued, with remorseful irritability, "till ye comed to dat 'wisp o' hay' business—dat wos de las' straw."

"Hay, Tim," I corrected.

"Hay er straw, it's all de same to dis gent. Gees! you is de worse liar wot I ever heard."

Tim's humiliation at the thought that he had been taken in was so comical that I had to laugh. He turned hastily for the door, and as he passed out cried:

"Good night, sir. Don' have no more nightmares like dat."

The first faint light of day was stealing into the room as I felt myself tugged gently by the toe. I opened my eyes and dimly saw Tim's dishevelled head at the foot of my bed.

"What is it, Tim?" I asked, in some surprise.

"Look'ee here," he said huskily, "tell me some more about this yere biffalo." And with a soft chuckle he tiptoed out of the room.

When the time came to send the German prisoners to England little Sergeant Mack was detailed to guard them. After a comfortable stay for two weeks in hospital, and with a keen recollection of kindly treatment throughout, it was hardly likely they would attempt violence or brave the dangers of escape. But Mack, seated in the ambulance with a dozen healthy-looking Germans, who could easily have eaten him alive had they been so disposed, clutched in his coat pocket a little .22 revolver

which Reggy had lent him. He seemed to appreciate the possibility of a catastrophe and, judging by the uneasy expression on his good-natured face, he had little relish for his precarious duty.

Even the ill-famed corporal looked his disappointment at leaving us, and the others seemed to feel that they would rather stay with captors whom they knew than fly to captors "whom they knew not of."

The Pole had, remarkable to relate, learned to speak English with a fair degree of success during his two weeks' stay, and quite openly expressed his regret at leaving. The others were merely silent and glum. Perhaps they felt that now that their wounds were healed, like well-fed cattle they were to be taken out and killed. The ambulance driver and Sergeant Honk were seated in front, but little Mack was alone inside, and they had twenty miles to go.

Nothing of moment happened until the ambulance, threading its way between the railroad tracks at Boulogne, pulled up upon the quay at the *Gare Maritime*. Here unexpected trouble arose. No German prisoners could be

taken upon the hospital ship; the Embarkation Officer refused to let them aboard. He said they must be taken back to the Canadian hospital until a proper boat was ready for them.

During this discussion it got whispered about amongst the populace that there were *Bosches* in the ambulance, and in an incredibly short space of time it was surrounded by an angry mob who shook their fists and swore savagely at the occupants. Apparently they only needed a leader to urge them on, and the Germans would have been torn from their seats. The prisoners remained quiet, but the pallor of their faces showed that they realised the seriousness of their position.

Sergeant Mack drew his little revolver and shouted to the driver to make haste and get away. The driver needed no further urging; the danger was too obvious. The car started with a jerk and cleared the crowd before they were aware of Mac's intentions, but they shouted wrathful oaths after it as it sped up the quay.

"Blimey, if them French ayn't got a bit uv temper too!" Honk ejaculated, as he wiped the

sweat from his excited brow; "five minutes more'n they'd 'ave 'ad them blighters inside by the scruff uv their bloomin' necks."

Imagine the surprise and dismay of the nurses as they saw the crowd of broadly smiling Germans coming up the hospital steps. The nurses, who had for two weeks repressed their natural antipathy to these men and had given them good care, felt considerably put out by their return. But the prisoners, like mangy dogs who had found a good home, were so glad to return to us that it was pitiful to see their pleased faces, and we took them in again with the best grace we could assume. The few hours they had had together in the ambulance had given them a chance to compare experiences. They were content. All we could hope was that our own boys under similar circumstances in Germany would be treated as tolerantly and well.

Three weeks afterward they all left for England, and even the Prussian was almost reconciled to us, for he said in parting: *"Auf Wiedersehen!"*

CHAPTER XIII

THE colonel's seven-passenger *Berliet* was chug-chugging softly at the villa door, the drowsy hum of the exhaust hinting of concealed power and speed. The colonel, Reggy, Jack Wellcombe and I were about to commence our long-looked-for trip to that battered corner of Belgium which still remained in British hands.

Tim was standing at the door with his master's "British warm" thrown across his arm, waiting for the colonel to come out. It was a clear cold February morning, the air had in it just the faintest hint of frost, but not a breath of wind stirred the green foliage of the pines. Lady Danby's runabout stood across the road, and from beneath it peeped a pair of trim limbs encased in thick woollen stockings and ending in a pair of lady's heavy walking boots; telling Tim that her ladyship's dainty "chauffeur" was somewhere there below.

The "lady-chauffeur" was one of that eccen-

tric, but interesting, band of mannish Englishwomen who invaded France in the early days of the war, and who have done wonders toward making Tommy's life in a foreign land agreeable. Intelligent, highly educated, remarkably indifferent to the opinion of the outside world, Miss Granville was a character worth more than a passing glance. Her toque was always pulled well over her ears, her thick, short grey woollen skirt had two immense pockets in the front, into which her hands, when not otherwise engaged, were always deeply thrust. A long cigarette invariably drooped from the corner of her pretty, but determined mouth, and she walked with a swinging, athletic stride. Romance might have passed her by unnoticed; but the world could not ignore her—she was too much a part of it. Some innate chivalry impelled Tim to step across and offer his assistance to the fair one in distress.

"Kin I be any help to ye, Miss?" he enquired, as he stooped down and peered underneath the car at the little lady who, stretched at full length upon her back, was smoking a cigarette and at the same time screwing home an unruly nut.

"Oh! Is that you, Tim?" she remarked without removing the cigarette or taking her eyes off her work. "No, thanks, I think not—this is a woman's job."

"Ladies does queer stunts in France," Tim commented meditatively; "we ain't taken advantage uv dem in Canada de way we ought. See how de womens here carries wood on dere backs, an' look at dem fish-women ketchin' skrimps in de sea. Gee, de gals to home ain't never seed real work!"

"You should train them, Tim. It's all a matter of up-bringing. Won't you have a cigarette?" she replied as she thrust a long open silver case out from under the car toward him. Tim extracted an Egyptian of a size such as he had never seen before.

"T'ankee, Miss—dat's a smoke fer a prince."

"That was the intention, Timothy," she remarked casually; and then came an unexpected question: "Do ladies in Canada smoke, Tim?"

Tim was visibly embarrassed. "Not sich as we *calls* ladies, Miss," he stammered; and then realising that he had made a *faux pas* he blundered on—"that is, Miss, I mean t' say—"

A rippling laugh from beneath the car cut short further explanation.

"Tim, Tim," she cried mockingly, "what a sad courtier you would make—you're too deliciously truthful."

Poor Tim was red with chagrin.

"I don' know wot a kertyer is," he replied defensively; "I'm a hod-carrier meself."

"Stick to it, lad," she laughed, "the hod lost one of its best exponents when you came to the war."

But the colonel now appeared at the door, and Tim, with a hasty adieu to his fair tormentor, sprang across the road. When we were all snugly tucked in the car, he stood for a moment looking ruefully toward the cause of his recent embarrassment.

"Dat's a queer gent, sir," he observed to the colonel, "dat lady-shoffer 'cross de way. It ain't on'y her boots wot's like a man's—de works in her belfry's queer too."

Reggy secretly sympathised with Tim's discomfiture, for it was only the day before, when he had made a graceful but unavailing whack at a golf ball, that he had turned to see her

watching him intently—hands in pockets, cigarette in mouth.

"Rotten stroke, Miss Granville?" he remarked, to cover his annoyance; and she had coolly blown a cloud of smoke through her nostrils and replied:

"You're dead lucky to have hit it at all."

As the car moved off Reggy exclaimed: "That's the sort of girl who never gets a husband."

"Why not?" queried the colonel.

"Too much brain," Reggy returned. "It's too humiliating for a man to have a wife cleverer than himself."

"All depends upon the man," the colonel commented drily. Reggy ventured no reply to this ambiguous retort, but for the next few miles seemed lost in thought.

An hour's uneventful run brought us to the barricade on the outskirts of Boulogne. It consisted of two large waggons placed at an oblique angle across the road, at the foot of a steep hill. It was so ingeniously arranged that a motor car could not pass except at low speed. We were stopped by the French guard who stood with fixed bayonet—that long slen-

der wicked-looking instrument, the sight of which makes cold shivers run up and down the back. The officer emerged from his little hut, and saluted with all the grace peculiar to the true Frenchman.

"Votre 'laisser-passer,' monsieur, si'l vous plais?" he demanded politely.

The colonel unfolded the large blue pass, duly signed and stamped. It was scrutinised closely, the name and number of the car were recorded, and the officer, once more saluting, motioned us to proceed.

Running a barricade in France is not a healthful exercise. We did it once, by mistake, but an immediate rifle shot brought us to a halt. The sentry takes nothing for granted; if one goes through six times a day, the pass must be produced each time. Even the small towns of northern France cannot be entered or left without this ceremony.

We lunched at *Mony's*—every English and Canadian officer in France knows the spot—a small Italian restaurant close to the theatre, where susbtantial but delicious meals pop up from the cellar's depths. In this small room with the sawdust-covered floor and the little

glass partitioned stalls, the full-stomached Signor Mony beams upon a clientele such as no other like café in the world can boast.

French, Belgian, English; yes, at times Italian, Russian, Serbian and even Japanese officers of high rank and ladies whose fame in charitable and Red Cross work is international, dine in this unique café. The little bar is in the dining room, and above its mahogany top you may see the head and shoulders of the proprietor's youthful daughter—a girl of such rare and artistic southern beauty that men and women too stare in admiring wonder.

But the military and the nobility are not the only guests. The crowded café distils a broad Bohemianism which startles one. At one table we see two dark-eyed "ladies-of-the-street" boldly ogling a couple of young subalterns in khaki who have just arrived from England. Brushing shoulders with the finest in the land the demimondaine quaffs her green liqueur, powders her nose and dabs again the painted cheek that riots in its bloom. At another table two French generals, oblivious to the hum about them, are planning schemes of

war too deep for thoughts of giddy girls who seek to catch their eye.

Above the glass partition curls the smoke of cigarettes, and the laughing voices of English-women tell us who are there. Upon the leather-cushioned bench which skirts the wall, a handsome Belgian, well past middle age, rests his chin upon the shoulder of a beautiful young Russian girl, and gently puts his arm about her waist. And as we look with passing interest at the pair, she takes the lit cigar from her companion's lips and places it between her own, blowing the clouds of smoke into his face. Every table but one is filled. The blended murmur of a dozen different tongues, the popping of champagne corks, the rippling laughter of the women, all combine in one strange sound in stranger France. One thing only reminds us of the outer world. The mani-coloured uniforms of soldiers of the several nations represented tell us all too truly that only a few miles away is the great grim battlefield and—death.

At 3 p.m. we started once more on the road and climbed the steep hill to that broad highway which leads to Calais. But now we reached another barricade, and an unexpected

obstacle arose. The sentry regretted with a shrug of the shoulders and both uplifted hands, but the road was under repairs, and none might pass that way.

Jack came to the rescue and appealed to him in his inimitable French. *Monsieur le Colonel* with him was urgently needed at the front. The shortest and quickest route was the only one for such an important man—great speed was essential to the completion of pressing duties.

We could see the sentry wavering. Jack repeated: *"Mon Colonel est bien pressé—bien pressé!"* The sentry capitulated—of course if the *Colonel* was *pressé,* there was nothing else for it. He let us pass. As we whirled along the road, Jack laughed in that boyish manner of his and exclaimed:

"If you're ever held up by a French sentry, you must always be *pressé*—it's a great word! If you're only *pressé* enough you can get anywhere in France."

There wasn't another vehicle but ours upon that splendid highway, and we bowled along at tremendous speed through green fertile valleys and through leafless forests, rounding the

curve which runs to the southeast from Calais and skimming along the crest of a low smooth mountain for mile upon mile.

We soon were on the road to St. Omer. From time to time the noisy whir of an aeroplane overhead helped us to realise that we were gradually drawing nearer to the real battle line, and once on looking up we could see the giant human bird at a great height, sailing above us. He came lower, so that we were able to see the pilot distinctly, and directed his course straight above the road. At the time we were travelling about fifty miles an hour, but he passed us as though we had been standing still—a moment later he became a mere speck in the distance, then faded into the mist beyond.

As we approached closer to the front we had expected to find the towns deserted except by troops. In this we were agreeably disappointed. As we entered St. Omer we found motors and waggons by the hundreds coming and going in a busy rush; every store was open too, and business was thriving with a thrift unknown before the war. Women and children, soldiers and civilians, crowded the busy

streets, and the hum of industry was heard on every hand. Here not many miles from the trenches, we could see again the undaunted confidence of France, implicit reliance upon her troops, unswerving loyalty to her ideals—unutterable contempt for the possibility of further German invasion. It was a revelation in faith and a stimulus to merit such whole-souled unbreakable trust.

We had just drawn up at the curb in the city square when a big Rolls-Royce turned the corner and stopped close to us. It contained a man who wore the uniform of the British Red Cross Society, and who well matched the car in size; he descended and hastened over to our car.

"Jack!" he cried delightedly, "old Jack Wellcombe; by George, I'm glad to see you!" As he spoke he shook Jack warmly by the hand. "You and your friends must come over to the 'Bachelor's Own' with me."

Jack performed the round of introductions, and Mr. Harman, who proved to be an American from Texas, reiterated that we must come and dine with him.

"Thanks, Harman, old chap; we really must

get along, we have to make Poperinghe tonight," Jack protested; but his American friend refused to take "no" for an answer.

"For," he concluded, parodying a line from a once popular opera, " 'you really must eat somewhere, and it might as well be here.' Don't be in a hurry to get to Poperinghe," he continued. "I was over there this afternoon when a German aviator came to call. Just as a preliminary, and in order to show his good faith, he dropped a bomb on the church—Some crash, I tell you. It trimmed one corner off the tower and spattered the door rather badly."

"Was any one hurt?" Reggy enquired anxiously.

"Not at the moment," Harman replied, "but a few hundred fools, including your humble servant, rushed into the square 'to see what made the wheels go round.' He hovered over us gracefully for a few moments, waiting to collect a good crowd of spectators, then he dropped a big one right into the centre of the mass."

"Good Lord!" Reggy exclaimed in a horrified whisper, "what happened?"

"Nothing as bad as we deserved, but there

were eleven killed and as many more wounded —it was a horrible sight! You'll see the effects of it still when you get there, in the broken windows and pieces of stone knocked out of the buildings for fifty yards around."

We decided to stay for dinner. We motored down a side street and pulled up at his "Bachelor's Own." It was a comfortable French house of the better class, with floor of coloured tile and long glass doors connecting all the down-stairs rooms. A piano and a grate-fire, around which a few leather easy chairs were placed, gave the "lounge" an appearance of homelike comfort—moreover, one might sit there and, by merely turning the head, see everything of interest on that floor. We noticed in the next room the table being spread for numerous guests, and a Belgian servant bustling about at his work.

Harman motioned us to be seated, and after offering us some cigarettes, told us to "make ourselves at home" as he must warn his butler (save us!) of our arrival. When he returned a few moments later, beaming with smiles, like the true host he proved to be, he remarked deprecatingly:

"You mustn't expect too much of an old bach's table in these rough war-worn days; but as far as it goes this is open house to every man in uniform."

Later in the evening, when guest after guest "dropped in," until there were eighteen of us in all, we grasped the significance of his remark, and realised what his genial hospitality meant to the lonely officers who passed that way.

We didn't expect too much—in fact we didn't expect half of what we got. We hadn't looked forward to grilled *merlin,* roast chicken, tender lamb, Jerusalem artichokes or delicious cantaloupe, nor to Gruyère cheese served with crisp cream-wafers. In our modesty we had forgotten to expect the mellow flavoured wines which clung to the sloping sides of glass as delicate as a spider's web, or rich Havana cigars and real Egyptian cigarettes. No, strange as it may seem to the casual reader, we hadn't expected any of these things; we were prepared for Bologna sausage and a can of sardines, but in these we were disappointed. A whirlwind of plenty rose at Harman's magic call, and cast us adrift upon a sea of luxury.

Towards the close of this splendid repast, I took occasion to ask our benevolent host to what particular branch of the Red Cross work he was devoting his energies.

"Just what you see," he answered with a laugh. "Cheering up dull dogs like Wellcombe here, as they pass upon their weary way—that's about all."

"He's talking bally rot!" cried Jack from his end of the table, "I'll tell you what he does, as he won't tell you himself. He feeds the hungry and the poor; he gives all kinds of delicacies, from pickles to pheasants, to the wounded and sick soldiers in the Field Ambulances and hospitals for miles around; he carries food and drink to the wounded Tommies in the trenches and the Dressing Stations. I've seen him steal out upon the battlefield in a perfect hell of machine gun bullets and shrapnel—places where the devil himself wouldn't venture or expect to get out alive—and carry back those poor shattered lads in his arms. He—"

"Jack, Jack," Harman cried in protest, "for heaven's sake have a little pity—I can't live up to a rep' like this!"

"Don't interrupt, please!" Jack commanded. "One word more and then I'm through. He's been a perpetual Santa Claus to every boy at the front, and a godsend to every man in the rear—a damn good fellow and a man." He had risen to his feet and struck the table with his hand in his earnestness. "Here's a toast for you, my comrades in arms," he cried in conclusion: "Here's to Harman—Harman the Red Cross hero of St. Omer!"

As one man we rose to our feet and drained our glasses dry.

After dinner we crowded into the lounge, and Jack sat down at the piano. With nimble fingers he drew soft music from the keys. We soon discovered we were in a nest of artists, drawn together by a common tie.

Little Watkins, another Red Cross driver, who, as we afterwards learned, had risked his life a score of times to help some wounded fellow on the treacherous road, sang for us. It seems but yesterday that we sat there in the smoke-filled room, listening with rapt attention to his silvery tenor voice. The flames from the fire lit up his face as the throbbing notes poured forth. *Je sais que vous etes jolie;*

we know now why he sang so well—he was in love. Poor Watkins has many months since passed to the "great beyond," but the sweet pathos of his voice still lingers in the ears of those he charmed that night.

Kennerly Rumford was then called upon—yes, the world-renowned Kennerly Rumford, in khaki in a little room in St. Omer—and in that magnificent baritone of his filled the house until it rocked with glorious sound. Rich, deep, rolling melody welled up from his great chest, until the wonder of it struck us dumb. I looked about me; pipes rested unused upon the table; cigarettes had been cast away, and the cigars, forgotten for the nonce, were dead.

We were loathe to leave this house of entertainment, but time was pressing, and we still had many miles to go.

The streets were black as pitch; no lights were permitted in the war zone, but at last we found our way out of the town, and started.

CHAPTER XIV

As we sped along the road to Poperinghe, the headlights of our car made a lone streak of white against the utter blackness of the outer world. Occasionally on the wings of the wind came the boom of the big guns, followed a moment after by the sharper crash of the bursting shells. The barricades became more numerous, and from time to time we were halted by a British sentry and our passes were scrutinised with especial care.

It was about ten p.m. when we crept softly through the outskirts of the little Belgian town which marked our destination for the night. We pulled up at a small hotel, less than a hundred yards from the spot where the German aviator had wrought such havoc that afternoon. The stone walls of the buildings about were marked with holes, which showed up plainly in the light from the car, and the cobblestones for several yards around were splintered.

As is the case with most small hostels in northern France and Belgium, the door through which we entered opened directly into the bar. The blaze of light within, well screened off from the street by heavy curtains, dazzled our eyes, and the crowded room with its round marble-topped tables was heavy with smoke. The ever-smiling bar-maids were having a busy time. Bottles of whiskey and soda, beer or wine, stood upon every side, and the clink of glasses intermingling with the clatter of foreign tongues, fell upon our ears. The soft, sibilant French, the cockney English and the guttural Flemish warred with one another in an unintelligible babble.

Jack seemed as much at home here as ever. The pretty blonde bar-maid, the daughter of the house, came forward to greet him, and shook him warmly by the hand. She assured him, and us, that *"M'sieu le Capitaine* was *toujours le bien venu."* In fact, we were made so welcome that we were shown forthwith into a private room, the better to avoid the noise and smoke of the bar.

"What are the prospects of a bed or two for four?" Jack asked the Belgian lassie.

Mademoiselle was *desolé,* but she feared the prospects were *bien mal*—in other words, *nil.* She would enquire across the way, however, and see if any of the houses round about could still boast an empty bed. She returned shortly, more *desolé* than ever. What with the thousands of Belgian, French and English troops billeted in the town, there was not a vacant room left. She would give up her own room for monsieur, but *hélas,* it was so *petite* there was only accommodation for one.

Reggy laughed. When Reggy could laugh at the prospect of no bed for the night the situation must have been amusing. "Colonel, you'll have to take the bed," he cried, "and the rest of us can sleep in the car."

"No, no," Jack protested; "we must all be together. We'll take a run up to the convent and see what Sister Paulo has to say."

"Good Lord!" laughed the Colonel. "You don't suppose a nun is going to house four strange officers for the night, do you?"

"All things are possible—in Belgium," Jack returned. "You don't yet know the size of the Belgian heart. Sister Paulo and I are old friends. I had the pleasure of bringing her

and several other Sisters of Charity out of Ypres one night last fall, during the bombardment. The *Bosches* had killed some of them and shot their poor convent full of holes. Sister Paulo gave me this silver crucifix as a memento of the occasion." He held up for our inspection an exquisite little cross. "I have always carried it since—she's a good sort; more woman than nun."

"If I should die and by mischance arrive in Hades," cried the colonel, "I hope you'll be in heaven, for I'm sure you'll have enough pull with St. Peter to get me up!"

As we crossed the dark square, crowded as it was with troops of the three nations on their way to and from the trenches, we could hear distinctly the rattle of artillery and the bursting of the German shells, not many miles away. A mischievous gun might have dropped a shell into that square at any moment—we wondered why it didn't. There could be only one reason. No humanitarian consideration ever deterred the German; but the town was so full of spies that it would not have been good business to bombard it. A few months later, when the spies were all eliminated, the long-range Ger-

man guns soon made short work of Poperinghe.

We arrived at a two-storey brick building, and after a lengthy pull at the bell-rope the door was slowly opened a little way. Jack enquired for Sister Paulo, and upon giving his name, the door was immediately thrown wide and we were ushered into a small waiting-room. We had scarcely seated ourselves when a tall nun, with saint-like face and frank smiling eyes entered the room. She recognised Jack at once and, holding out both hands in greeting to him, exclaimed in excellent English:

"My dear Capitaine! How glad I am to see you once more—you are as welcome as your name."

"These are some very dear friends of mine, Sister Paulo," Jack cried, after he had introduced us individually, "and we have come to you in distress—we poor sons of men have no place to lay our heads."

"Ah!" said Sister Paulo, with a gracious smile, "perhaps we shall now have an opportunity of doing you a little kindness for your many, many goodnesses to us." She turned to us and continued: "You see, Capitaine Well-

combe risked his life to save ours. He came to our Convent in Ypres during the night of that frightful battle, when the shells were falling in thousands about us, and the city was in ruins. One big shell tore through the wall and fell into the building—I shall never forget the horror of that night! The streets were lit up by fires, and the noise was awful beyond words. We were distracted—we seemed to have been forgotten by every one, when suddenly Captain Wellcombe came like an angel from above and climbed in through the rent in the wall. One by one he carried us out in his arms and put us in an ambulance. He took us through those dreadful streets and brought us here to safety. He is a brave man, and every night we pray for his protection."

For once in his life Jack looked embarrassed, and blushed like a school-girl. "Sister Paulo exaggerates, I'm afraid," he said, in some confusion. "It seemed more dangerous than it really was."

"You may make light of it, if you wish, my dear Capitaine," Sister Paulo replied, holding up a reproving finger, "but you can never make

it to us less than the act of a brave and noble man!"

She left us for a space, but shortly returned to tell us that our rooms were ready and that we were thrice welcome to what accommodation their poor house afforded. We were ushered upstairs and along a narrow hall in which we met several Belgian officers, who bowed low as we passed. Jack was given a small room to himself.

When Reggy and the colonel and I arrived at the room which was pointed out as ours for the night we met a tall Belgian officer coming out of it. We grasped the situation on the instant. These officers, who had been hastily aroused, were, with their remarkable courtesy and native hospitality, actually giving up their beds to us. The others had already disappeared down the stairs, and this officer too would have passed us with a bow, but we arrested him and protested that he must on no account deprive himself of his room.

"But you are not disturbing me in the least," he replied in French; "you are doing me a great pleasure by accepting my bed."

We assured him that we should be able to

find accommodation somewhere, and that we felt very guilty for having been the cause of so much inconvenience.

"My dear sirs," he protested feelingly, "there is but a very small corner of Belgium left to us; there is so little opportunity for us to offer hospitality to a guest, that when such an occasion as this arises where we have the honour of accommodating our English friends —it would be unkind if you denied us this poor privilege."

We could not doubt his sincerity, and felt that he would be hurt if we made any further protest. Where he was to sleep we did not know; but we thanked him, and after bidding him *bonsoir,* passed inside. There was a single and a double bed in the room. The tables were strewn with swords, revolvers, field glasses, prismatic compasses and all the usual accoutrements of military officers. It was evident the room had been vacated hastily.

The single bed naturally fell to the lot of the colonel, while Reggy and I, being a trifle smaller than he, clambered into the other—a high, old-fashioned one. Reggy sank wearily into the feather mattress and fell asleep as soon

as his head touched the pillow. He had the happy faculty of being able to sleep anywhere and at any time.

We were to make an early start, and six a.m. came all too soon. A light French breakfast was prepared for us when we descended. About an hour later, after expressing our deep thanks to our gracious hostess, we got into the motor once more and started on the road towards Ypres. There wasn't a cloud in the sky. The sun shone brightly, and not a warlike sound broke the stillness of the clear, cool air as we sped along between the tall poplars which lined the road. One thing only reminded us that we were approaching close to the battle line—the reserve trenches dug on either side. These we passed from time to time; but they were half full of water and uninhabited, and it was apparent there was little thought of their ever being needed.

Here and there a few horses were tethered in poor canvas-covered shelters, and in the farmyards near-by we saw numbers of French military waggons which looked like gipsy carts. Occasionally we overtook a battalion of French or Belgian troops marching quietly towards the

trenches. Their apparent absence of any definite marching formation struck us with surprise. They did not walk in line, but ambled along of their own free will; some with loaves of bread or rolls strapped to their knapsacks, and one carrying a roast of beef under his arm. They seemed to have foraged for themselves, and carried along any extras which appealed to their individual fancy. But they were a tall, stalwart-looking body of men, and we felt sure were much better trained than their irregular march would indicate.

We had reached a point about midway between Poperinghe and Ypres. The morning was still soundless, save for the whir of our motor.

"Looking at this blue sky and the quiet fields, who would ever believe there is a war so near?" Reggy remarked.

These words had no sooner fallen from his lips than the air was suddenly rent with the blast of gun after gun, so close on our right that we were startled and instinctively jumped towards the left of our car. The sharp bursting of shells over our heads impelled us to look

up, and there directly above us was a German aeroplane.

Shell after shell burst below him, leaving rounded clouds of white smoke hanging in the still air, and as each exploded the aviator rose higher and higher. The range of the guns grew longer; some shells burst above him; some to right or left. Round after round of shrapnel followed his every movement. We looked in vain for the battery. They were so carefully hidden that although we could not have been fifty yards away, there was not the slightest visible sign to indicate their position.

At the same time the whirring rat-tat-tat-tat of a machine gun close beside us on the left made us turn our heads sharply in that direction. At first we could not see this gun either, but guided by the sound we soon discovered it on a platform halfway up the outside of a farmhouse, against the wall, and manned by a French soldier. We watched the aviator with the same interest that a quartette of hunters might view some great bird, hoping to see him winged. But he seemed to bear a charmed life, and dodged shrapnel and machine-gun bullets alike, soaring higher and higher until he be-

came a mere speck in the heavens. Then the firing ceased as abruptly as it had commenced.

Our car had been stopped during this one-sided battle, but now that it was over we started on again. The cobblestone road had been torn up by shell fire in many places, and driving was rough and difficult. We passed batteries of artillery and long lines of army service waggons, wending their way Ypres-ward. There was no further firing for the present and we crossed the bridge over the Yser and entered the town without mishap. From the distance there was little change to be noticed in Ypres; but now that we entered the streets we soon saw the effects of the bombardment. For the most part the smaller houses had not at this time been destroyed; but every large building in the place was in ruins. Churches, convents, schools and factories had been ruthlessly crushed, and the railway station was levelled to the earth. The streets were almost deserted, shops were long since closed, and business was dead.

We arrived at *La Grand Place*—once the scene of a busy market, and stood beside the ruins of the famous Guild Hall. Its roof had

fallen in; the walls were shattered; piles of stones and mortar had tumbled into the street. The clock tower alone, as if in defiance of the German gunners, stood erect and the clock remained untouched. A dead horse lying close by upon the pavement reminded us that we were now within easy reach of the enemy's fire.

We turned and walked across to the Cathedral of St. Martin; a short time since the pride of that beautiful city. Alas! it too was lost. We clambered over the ruins and got upon the window ledge to look within. The priceless panes were gone; the marble floor, except in patches here and there, was buried deep and the great supporting columns of the dome had toppled over; one lay across the nave, its round flat stones still clinging obliquely together and lying like *rouleaux* of coin side by side. The sacrilegious shells had burst into the chapel of the Holy Sacrament, had desecrated the altar and piled huge heaps of masonry upon the floor. The crucifix had disappeared, but the statues of the saints, by some strange miracle, remained intact.

From the torn paintings upon the walls the faces seemed to have turned appealingly to-

ward the open roof, their gaze fixed as in a last pitiful prayer to heaven. They were lost—those wondrous works of Art which once with magic charm had held the world enthralled. Never again would humanity come to bow in humble admiration at that shrine of beauty, nor gather inspiration from the hallowed walls. And as we looked upon the wreck about us, now but the memories of an irrestorable past, our bitter thoughts travelled across the lines of trenches to that strange race to whom no neighbour's hall or home is sacred and to whom the work of centuries, the irreplaceable monuments of master minds, are naught.

As we looked again upon those time-honoured, tottering walls the great jagged holes seemed to cry out to us for revenge, and a sudden just but implacable anger against the perpetrators of these hideous world-crimes stormed within our hearts and choked our utterance.

With a sigh we turned from the contemplation of this scene of wanton destruction and started our walk through the desolate streets. Crossing the Menin road, we entered that little graveyard where so many of our brave men

lay buried. The houses round about lay crumbled, but this sacred spot, by accident or design, had been spared. As we passed bareheaded down the path between rows of closely crowded graves, the new-made wooden crosses seemed to lift their white arms to us in mute appeal. Here and there the cap of some once gallant French or Belgian officer hung upon his cross —a crown of glory that no mortal hand dare touch. Some of these caps had rested there for months, rotted by rain, torn by the wind, faded by the sun—but dyed with a glory which time could never dim, and emblazoned with the halo of self-sacrifice. And as we stood there upon the threshold of the battlefield we saw the conflict in a clearer light—behind us faith and patriotism; in front patience and heroism, and at our feet self-sacrifice and deathless love.

A great wreath of purple leaves lay upon the grave of a young prince, clinging lovingly to the new-made mound. He rested there side by side with his humbler fellows—they had fought and died together. We sometimes forget that a prince is human; he seems so far above us—he lives in a different sphere and appears to be cast in a different mould. But

when we stand beside his grave, we realise at last that he was but a mortal like ourselves; that he has lived his life like us—the same desires, the same ambitions and the same need for love. Only one word was entwined, in white letters, with the purple leaves; only one word, but it bridged two countries and two souls—heaven and earth were joined—for the small white flowers clinging together spelled the magic name of *"Mother."* We may fall unnoticed in the thick of battle, we may be buried with a host of comrades in a nameless grave, but a mother's heart will seek us out, no matter where we lie, and wrap our lonely souls about with the mantle of her undying love.

"You have seen both ends of a battle now—the hospital and the graveyard," Jack exclaimed, as we left the cemetery; "come with me and I will show you what it is like to be in the middle."

"Can't we take a little walk along this road, and see the first line trenches?" Reggy enquired. We were crossing the Menin road again at the moment.

Jack laughed. "Not if you wish to come further with us. If you step out of this shel-

ter in daylight there won't be any Reggy to brighten our trip. No one goes out there in daylight—that is, if he wishes to attain old age."

"But it seems so quiet here," Reggy protested. "Apart from broken-down buildings, I can't see a sign of a war—there isn't a soul in sight but ourselves."

"Jolly good reason," Jack replied. "If you take a peep through the hedge there you'll see the trenches—we're as close as we dare go at present."

Reggy looked disappointed. "There isn't even a gun," he complained.

It seemed as if the invisible gunners had heard him, for suddenly the fields round about us sprang to life and belched forth smoke and shells. Some cannon in the dark shade of the bushes were actually so close that we could see the streak of flame from the muzzle light the shadow. The Germans were not slow to retaliate, and in a few minutes the roar of their guns and the howl and crash of shells added to the general clamour. Fortunately they did not appear to have our range, and the shells fell far afield.

"That's what *you* brought down upon us—you doubting Thomas," Jack remarked facetiously to Reggy. "You've started a nice row now that will last for hours."

"Isn't this great!" Reggy cried like a pleased child. "I wouldn't have missed this for a million."

"I hope Fritzie will miss you for less," laughed the colonel, "or we'll be short an ex-Mess Secretary."

Reggy vouchsafed no reply to this hope.

"We'd better get along out of this," Jack said; "the *Bosches* may discover their mistake before long and pour a little shower of hate on us."

We got into the motor and started towards the Dickibusch road. At Jack's request we stopped for a few minutes at the ruins of a large schoolhouse which had comprised one city block. The semblance of a building remained, but the walls stood only in jagged patches.

"These are the remains of our Field Ambulance," Jack explained. "Come inside and see; you will get a faint idea of what the 'Jack Johnsons' did to our hospital wards."

We passed into what had once been the main entrance. The doorway had received one great shell which on bursting had carried the four walls with it. We stumbled along the floor over heaps of brick and mortar; through piles of broken chairs and beds, and, climbing the ruins of the staircase, arrived upon a landing from which we could see the interior of what had once been a large room.

"This was my ward," Jack told us. "You see that big hole in the roof? A big shell came through there, and burst right here." He pointed to a wide, irregular opening in the floor. Every stick of furniture was smashed to atoms. Daylight came through great gaping holes in the walls and floor. The beds were merely nests of twisted iron. The greater part of the ceiling had fallen in and lay in a heap in the centre of the room.

As we walked about we saw that every other ward was in a similar condition. We went out into the schoolyard. There were five or six tremendous excavations in the ground, perfectly round and capable of holding a baby whale. There was no earth heaped up, for

the big shells which made these hollows left nothing behind.

We were still standing there when suddenly there arose a noise like the muffled scream of a distant multitude. We stood rooted to the spot, wondering what grim horror this might be. It grew louder and louder, coming towards us at terrific speed.

"For God's sake," I cried to Jack, "what is that awful sound?"

"Look into the field—quick—you will see!"

We all looked. The sound became a roar—a crash, and then about a hundred yards away the earth sprang high into the air in a great black mass intermingled with clouds of smoke and stones.

"Permit me," Jack remarked coolly, "to introduce you to 'Jack Johnson.' Now you can understand a little how those poor boys in the hospital felt when he came crashing through the roof."

"If we stay here a few minutes longer," the colonel remarked, "we may have it brought even more dramatically to our attention."

Jack laughed. "Oh," he cried, "we're as

safe here as anywhere—you never can tell where the next will drop."

We were soon to verify the truth of this remark.

CHAPTER XV

We had turned the corner of the road on which we had just witnessed the effect of the big shell—the hole was still smoking—when once again we heard the distant whine. This time there was no need to ask what it meant; we knew all too well, and for an anxious moment or two we wondered whether after its arrival the newspapers would speak well of us, or whether we should be blown into such small pieces that we should only be reported "missing."

It is recorded that sometimes those who are drowning are able, in a few brief moments, to rehearse the drama of their lives. Our lives must have been too complicated for such hasty revision, but as the sound changed from a whine to a shriek, an unearthly roar, and with a crash like the crack of doom the ground opened before us and shot a blinding storm of rocks and mud sky high—when all this occurred far, far faster than I can pen the lines,

we had plenty of time to develop a nasty pain in the pit of the stomach, to which the mystic torment of an unripe cucumber is a joy. A great cavity yawned before us where once the road had been, and belched forth clouds of smoke as if the crust of hell were riven in twain. At the same moment, lest our tranquillity should be restored too soon, our own guns opened up with a vicious roar and hurled their screeching shells over our heads like myriads of fiends possessed. Reggy's face was a study in black and white—I couldn't see my own.

"Do you think the Germans see us?" he enquired anxiously of Jack.

"No, I think not," Jack reassured him; "it's customary for them to shell any good road in the hope of picking off a convoy."

"It's a damned uncomfortable custom," Reggy returned earnestly, "and I could forgive them for not observing it for the next ten minutes."

The chauffeur, who had stopped the car dead by using the emergency brake, now released it, and we started forward again. But we had considerable difficulty in navigating the ditch on the side of what had been the road.

We had just moved in time, for a second shell dropped where we had been a moment since, and tore the opposite side of the road away.

"Being between two lines of artillery is a little too much like battledore and shuttlecock," I remarked to Reggy, "with all the odds against the shuttlecock."

"Object to word 'battledore,'" Reggy retorted; "it's too frivolous and pun-like for the present dangerous occasion."

We were now making haste towards a small village a few miles ahead, and we were not sorry as we passed into the poor shelter its brick houses afforded. As long as we were on the open road it was quite impossible to rid oneself of the feeling that the car was in full view of the German gunners.

The streets of this dirty little village were filled with British Tommies, who, still covered with the mud from the trenches, were as care-free and happy as were those fifty miles from the front. They smoked and chatted together in little groups at the entrance or in the courtyards of the miserable hotels, one at least of which seemed to be on every block. As we drew up the colonel enquired of a sentry:

"Can you tell me where the 'Princess Patricias' are billeted?"

We had been informed that this famous battalion, which had reached France just six weeks after us, was somewhere in this neighbourhood. To discover their whereabouts was the real object of our journey. The sentry made reply:

"I believe, sir, there is a battalion of that naime 'ere somew'eres. Hi, Bill!" he called to another Tommy, who was leaning against a near-by door-post; "w'ere is them Canydians wot wos 'ere t'other day?"

"Bill" banked his cigarette by pressing it against the wall and came over on the double to the side of our car. He saluted with that peculiar Jumping-Jack motion so much a part of the real Tommy, and ejaculated:

"I 'eard they was at the next town, sir; it ayn't far from 'ere, but it's a funny naime—Runnin'-hell, er somethin' like."

"Would it be Reninghelst?" Jack enquired.

"Ay—that's it, sir; I knowed they was 'hell' in it somew'eres."

"Just since the 'Canydians' came, I'll wager?" Reggy interjected mischievously.

The Tommy grinned approval of this jest, and volunteered to show us the direction. He stood on the running board of the car and saw that we got started on the right road.

"Straight ahead now, sir," he said, as he saluted and sprang down.

The heavy shelling had died away, and for the next two miles the sun shone on a peaceful country. We had a chance to marvel at the well-ploughed fields, and wondered what venturesome farmers dared work in such a place. It was almost noon and we had begun to think that we had left the war behind us once more, when suddenly the rapid bark of German guns aroused us, and the sharp crack of shrapnel high above our heads caused us to look up. A new sight met our gaze.

Three of our own aeroplanes were hovering directly over the German trenches, and battery after battery of artillery were exhausting themselves in an angry effort to bring them down. The accuracy of the enemy gunners startled us. This time we were not the hunters, and our sympathies were with the aviators. As shell after shell burst, leaving their white clouds to right or left, we held our breath in suspense.

Time and again, as the explosion occurred directly under one of our machines, the smoke hid it from view, and, in a tremor of anxiety, we feared to see it dive to earth. But when the smoke cleared away our three undaunted birdmen were still on high, swooping over the German batteries with a persistence and intrepidity which must have been maddening to the helpless *Bosches.*

It wasn't long before two enemy aviators rose to give battle, and as they approached our men the firing from below ceased. The five aeroplanes circled round and round, apparently sparring for position, and rose to such great height that we could hardly distinguish them. They were so close together that neither the British nor German artillery dared fire upon them. At last one of the enemy machines detached itself from the others and darted towards our lines with the speed of the wind.

Immediately our batteries opened up, and round after round of bursting shells followed its every movement; now to right, now to left; now above, now below, ever closer to their mark. Finally one well-directed shell burst

immediately beneath the aviator. The machine was straight over our heads; we craned our necks to follow it. It swerved and fluttered like a wounded bird, slipped sideways, fell for a short distance, then seemed to stagger like a drunken man; righted itself at last and swiftly descended towards the German lines. That the aviator was wounded we did not doubt, but he had somehow escaped death. In the meantime we had lost sight of the other four machines, and when we looked for them again they had disappeared from view.

The streets of Reninghelst were crowded with soldiers when we reached that town, and among them we recognised, to our joy, some stalwart lads from the "Princess Pats." On the corner was a group of young officers, and in the crowd we espied the familiar features of Captain Stewart who had spent his last night in Canada with us. At the same moment he recognised us and hurried over to the car to greet us.

"Well, well," he cried delightedly, as he shook hands with us two at a time, "welcome to our city! Where the devil did you chaps spring from?"

We assured him that his question was quite *à propos,* as we had just passed through the infernal regions. He laughed as he replied:

"Interesting bit of road, that stretch between Ypres and here—been in the front line trenches ourselves for a week out there—caught blazes, too!"

His uniform still showed the effects of the trench mud. He was a tall, thin chap, prematurely grey. Like many others of the Princess Pats, he was a veteran of the South African War, a crack-shot, and all-round dare-devil. He spoke in short, quick snatches, starting his sentences with unexpected jerks, and could keep a regiment in shrieks of laughter.

"How is the trench life out here?" the colonel enquired, with a jerk of the head towards the battle line.

"Plain hell—with a capital H. Excuse the repetition of the word—nothing else describes it—a quagmire two feet deep, full of mud and filth."

"Couldn't you dig it deeper?" Reggy enquired with some concern.

"No chance—everywhere you dig—turn up

rotting carcases—farther down you go the more water you have to stand in."

"The snipers are bad too, are they not?" I asked him.

He laughed again. "*Were* bad, you mean," he cried; "not many left around our trench. Poor Fritzie found us a nasty lot—played dirty tricks on him—organised a 'snipe-the-sniper' squad—put 'em out of business."

"How did you manage it?" I asked curiously.

"Stalked 'em—like red Indians—dug a tunnel out to a hill too—came up through the centre of it—hollowed it out inside—and put 'em to sleep one by one. Fritzie doesn't love us any more, but, by Gad, he respects us!"

After we had listened to a few more details of this wild and remarkable life, the colonel enquired:

"Where are your headquarters? We want to see your O.C. and the rest of the chaps."

"I'll climb in and show you the way. It's in another village a few miles from here."

Under his guidance we soon found ourselves in the town, and we stopped at the entrance of a small house which still claimed a patch of

garden in front. The room we entered contained a barrack table strewn with field maps and papers, and on the tile floor were the sleeping bags of the four officers who made this their temporary home. Major Gault, a tall, handsome officer, with the bearing of the true soldier, rose to welcome us.

"It seems good to see some one from home again," he exclaimed, as we shook hands. "I thought we were the only Canucks in Belgium."

"You were the first Canadians in Belgium, but we beat you to France by some weeks," the colonel replied, "and we have come up here to tell you where we live, and to let you know that there is a Canadian hospital waiting with open arms to receive you when you call."

"That's splendid," cried the major; "when the boys get hurt be sure you'll hear from us."

It is just as well we cannot look into the future. We walk blindfolded, clinging to the hand of Hope, and trust to her for kindly guidance. None of us at that moment guessed how soon we were to "hear" from those brave men.

Later, when we were about to start for home, they all came out to the car to say *au revoir*.

"It's a good expression—*'au revoir,'* " Captain Stewart cried, as we were parting; "much better than 'Good-bye.' "

"Take care of yourselves," we cried, "but don't forget if you need us, we are waiting!"

"We'll remember," Stewart returned, "for I have a premonition I'll not be *killed* in this war."

He waved his hand as we left, and when we looked back the little group, whom we were never to see together again, waved their hands in a last farewell.

After about an hour's run we saw in the distance, set like a jewel of the Tyrolese Alps, the pretty town of Cassel, near which our own Canadian boys were shortly to be quartered. It was about twenty miles in a direct line from the trenches, and soon after our visit the long-range German guns dropped their tremendous shells on its outskirts.

When we reached the hospital a cablegram was waiting for the colonel. He tore it open hastily, fearing bad news from home. As he read its contents his mouth expanded in a broad grin, and he passed it silently to us. We read, and Reggy, looking over Jack's shoulder, had

the grace to blush as he too saw his mother's message:

"Greatly worried about my son. No word from him for weeks. He was troubled with insomnia at home. Does he sleep better now? Cable my expense."

And the colonel sat down and forthwith wrote this soothing reply:

"Reggy splendid. Awake only at meal hours. Don't worry!"

Late one night, about a week after our visit to the firing line, we were at the railway yard assisting in the unloading of a train of wounded. About three hundred and fifty had arrived, and we were transporting them rapidly to the hospital. The Medical Officer commanding the train approached me and said:

"I have one car filled with wounded officers, and nearly all are stretcher cases. Will you come and see them?"

We walked down the line of cars and, mounting the steps, entered the officers' coach,

We passed between the cots, and chatted with each officer in turn; they seemed quite cheery and bright. But one, who had pulled the blankets high about his neck, and whose face was partly covered with a sleeping-cap, looked very ill indeed. Unlike the others, he didn't smile as we approached, but looked up without interest. His face was white and he took no notice of his surroundings. I asked him how he felt. He answered slowly and in a weak voice:

"I'm all in, I guess—don't trouble about me."

Something in the voice and the jerky manner of speech seemed familiar. I looked at him more keenly.

"Stewart!" I exclaimed with involuntary dismay. "Good Lord, it's Charley Stewart!"

"Oh, is that you, Major?" he said, with a faint show of interest. "I've come to call, you see, sooner than I expected. It'll be a short visit," he continued grimly. "Short trip and a dull one."

"Surely it's not as bad as that," I said, as encouragingly as I could, but feeling very sick at heart as I looked down at his pale face.

"Hole through the stomach," he replied weakly. "Bad enough for a start."

"We'll take you up to the hospital—I'm sure we can fix you up all right," I said, with as much assurance as I could assume.

"Take me wherever you like," he replied dully; "it won't be for long."

I assisted in getting him into an ambulance, and cautioned the driver to go carefully, and after seeing the others safely transferred, sprang into a motor and followed. Imagine my surprise and chagrin when I reached the hospital to find that he had not arrived, and after due enquiry discovered that he had been taken, through some misunderstanding on the part of the ambulance driver, to Lady Danby's hospital. We concluded it would be unsafe to move him again that night, and after 'phoning the commanding officer to give him his very best attention, proceeded with the urgent work of caring for the hundreds of others who had already arrived.

In the meantime Captain Stewart was carried through the imposing portal of his new abode. As the stretcher was deposited with a slight jar upon the floor in the centre of a great

hall, he opened his eyes and stared in wonder, first at the vaulted roof, then at the magnificent paintings on the walls, the stage at the far end of the hall, and last, but by no means least, at Lady Danby's beautiful face as she leaned over him to assist him. Her golden hair, her big blue eyes and flushed cheeks, and her graceful figure were too much even for a man half dead. He gave one more helpless glance at the stage, then his gaze returned to this vision, and, closing his eyes in a sort of drowsy ecstasy, murmured:

"Where's George Cohan and the chorus?"

"What does he say?" asked Lady Danby in surprise.

"He takes this for a theatre, and is asking where the chorus girls are," a sprightly nurse volunteered, with keen appreciation, and not a little amused at the shocked expression on Lady Danby's face.

"Dear me," she exclaimed, "it must be one of those dreadful Canadians!"

"I'm afraid he's not quite himself at present, your ladyship," the nurse protested, scarcely able to repress a smile.

Stewart opened his eyes once more and re-

marked coolly as Lady Danby hastened to another patient: "No—not quite all there—part shot away, excuse me." He then closed his eyes again and lay still until the orderlies removed him to his bed.

The Medical Officer came to examine him, and the nurse cut away the dressings from his side. He inspected the wound very carefully and finally said:

"Rifle bullet wound through the lower lobe of left lung. It might have been worse."

"How long do you think I have to live?" Stewart enquired, with some anxiety.

"To live?" cried the surgeon, with a laugh. "About thirty or forty years, with luck."

"What!" shouted Stewart, as he half sat up in bed with a quick jerk. "Do you mean to tell me I have the ghost of a chance?"

"You'll have a splendid chance if you keep quiet and don't shout like that. You'd better lie down again," the surgeon commanded, not unkindly.

"But, good Lord," Stewart protested animatedly, "here I've been trying to die for three days,—every one encouraged me to do it; and after passing through four surgeons'

hands, you're the first to tell me I have a chance. It's wonderful. Now I *will* live—I've made up my mind."

"Who said you would die?"

"First the Chaplain at the Field Ambulance where they carried me in—more dead than alive. He came and shook his head over me. He was a good chap and meant well, I'm sure—he looked very dismal. I asked him if I would die, and he answered pityingly: 'A man shot through the stomach can't live, my poor fellow. Shall I pray for you?' I told him to go as far as he liked—he got on his knees and prayed like the deuce."

"But you said you were wounded three days ago," the surgeon remarked. "What kept you so long from reaching here?"

"I lay one whole day in front of the trench where I was wounded. The stretcher-bearers, against my wishes, came out to bring me in—just as the man at my head stooped down they shot him through the brain. I heard the bullet go 'chuck,'—he fell stone dead across me. I ordered the others back at once—that they must leave me until night. They refused to go at first, but I commanded them again to

get back—at last when they saw I was determined, they went. Poor chaps! I know they felt worse at leaving me than as if they had been shot down."

During this conversation the surgeon had dressed the wound, and now, admonishing his patient that he must not talk any more, left him for the night. In the morning Lady Danby came to his cot and marvelled at his bright face and cheery smile.

"You're feeling better this morning, I see," she remarked brightly.

"Much the better for seeing you, madam," Stewart returned, with his customary chivalry; "and one does recover rapidly with such excellent nursing and care."

"I'm afraid we're going to lose you to-day," she replied, with a tinge of regret in her tone. "The Canadians insist on claiming you as their own, and I suppose we must let you go."

"I must admit," he returned, "that I am sorry to leave such congenial company—come and see me sometimes, won't you, please?"

Lady Danby smiled. "When I first saw you last night, I thought I shouldn't care to see you again—but you aren't really quite as dreadful

as I thought. Some day soon I'll run in to see how you are getting on."

A few hours later, when Stewart was safely ensconced in our hospital, he observed reminiscently: "I'm awfully glad to be among old friends once more—but those English hospitals are not without their attractions!"

CHAPTER XVI

He was a mere boy, scarce nineteen years of age, a sub-lieutenant in the Territorials, and a medallist in philosophy from Oxford.

Who would have guessed that this frail, delicate-looking Welsh youth with the fair hair and grey eyes was gifted with an intellect of which all England might be proud? He might have passed unnoticed had one not spoken to him, and, having spoken, had seen the handsome face light up with fascinating vivacity as he replied.

One cannot attempt to recollect or depict the mystic workings of his marvellous mind; for, once aroused, gems of thought, clear cut and bright as scintillations from a star, dropped from his lips and left his hearers steeped in wonder.

It was then, you may well believe, no ordinary youth who walked into the hospital, with mud-covered clothes and his kit still strapped to his back. He dropped the kit upon the floor

of his room and, sinking wearily into a chair, brushed back with his hand the unruly hair which sought to droop over his high forehead.

His commanding officer, who had accompanied him to the hospital, had taken me aside, before I entered the room, and had told me privately his views about the boy.

"You look tired," I remarked, as I noted the weary droop of the head.

He smiled quickly as he looked up and said: "Done up, I think. Those six months in Malta were a bit too much for me."

"But you have been home before coming to France, have you not?" I asked him.

"Home!" he cried in surprise. "No such luck! We had expected a week or two in England after our return, but it's off. There were four thousand of us in Malta, but we're all here now, at Etaples, and liable to be sent to the trenches any moment. When I stood on the cliffs at Wimereux yesterday and saw the dear old shores across the Channel—" He stopped suddenly, overpowered by some strong emotion. "I'd be a better soldier farther off. Between homesickness and the pain in my chest, I'm about all in."

He did look tired and faint, and even the pink rays of the setting sun failed to tint the pallor of his cheeks. I told him I would send the orderly to help him undress and that he must get into bed at once.

When I returned shortly and examined his chest, I found that he was suffering from a touch of pleurisy; there were, too, traces of more serious trouble in the lungs.

"What do you think of me, Major?" he enquired with a quizzical smile, when I had completed the examination. "Anything interesting inside?"

"Interesting enough to call for a long rest," I replied. "We'll have to keep you here a while and later send you home to England."

"My O.C., who by the way is my uncle too, and a medical man, insisted on my coming here," he remarked. "He says I'm not strong enough for trench life. But the old boy—bless his heart!—loves me like a son, and I'm morally certain he wants to pack me off for fear I'll get killed. I simply can't go home, you know, until I've done my bit. It would be jolly weak of me, wouldn't it?"

"You might go for a time," I replied guard-

edly, "and return later on when you get stronger."

He started to laugh, but a quick stabbing pain in the chest caught him halfway, and he stopped short with a twisted smile as he exclaimed:

"I believe the old chap has been talking to you too! You're all in league to get me out of France."

This was so close to the truth that I could not contradict him, but shook my head in partial negative. His uncle felt, as I too came to feel later, that the loss to the world of such a brilliant mind and one with such potentialities would not be compensated for by the little good its master could accomplish physically in the trenches.

"After all," he argued, "how much poorer would Wales be if I were gone? The hole would soon be filled."

"I can't agree with you," I answered slowly; "your life is more important to others than you think, and you would risk it in a field for which you are not physically fitted. You have overdrawn your brain account at the Bank of Na-

ture, and flesh is paying up. You must go home until the note is settled."

"Sounds rational but horribly mathematical —and I always hated mathematics. Hope I'll be able," he continued mischievously, "to repay the 'interest' you and uncle are taking in me."

"We want you to consider the matter philosophically," I said, "not mathematically."

"That's better," he replied, with his usual bright smile; "philosophy comes more natural to me. True, it savours of Euclid, but I can forgive it that offence; it has so many virtues."

He remained silent a few moments, thinking, and then asked me suddenly: "If I go home, how soon can I get back to France?"

"I hope you won't return here," I replied gravely; "it would be suicidal, and, flattery aside, your life is too valuable to be sacrificed over here."

"Perhaps you are right," he murmured pensively, as though we were discussing a third party whose life interested him only in an impersonal manner, and without exhibiting the slightest self-consciousness or vanity. "It might be better if I stayed at home. I admit,"

he continued more brightly, "I have a selfish desire to live. I am so young and have seen so little of this great big interesting world and I want so much to know what it all means. Still I would far sooner die than feel myself a slacker or a 'skrimshanker.' "

"No one will mistake you for either," I returned warmly. "Your lungs are not strong, and I fear if you remain here in the cold and wet you will not recover."

"There's so much in life to live for," he cried animatedly; "besides, I'm a little dubious of the *after* world. For a little longer I should like to learn what tangible pleasures this world offers, rather than tempt the unsubstantiated promises of a future state."

"But surely you believe in an after life?" I enquired, in some surprise.

"It's difficult to believe what one cannot prove," he returned evasively.

"But," I ventured argumentatively, "I can imagine that if the total *matter* in the universe is indestructible and cannot be added to or taken from, the *soul* too is indestructible—it may be changed, but cannot be destroyed."

"Ah!" he exclaimed quickly, "you are as-

suming the reality of the abstract. Suppose I do not agree with your hypothesis, and deny the existence of the soul! You cannot prove me wrong. Sometimes I fear," he continued more softly, "the soul, or what we conceive to be the soul, is merely the reflection of poor Humanity beating its anxious wings against the horror of extinction."

"Or the shadow of a poor physician scuttling away from the terrors of your philosophy," I laughed. "You iconoclasts would pull our castles-in-the-air about our ears and leave us standing in the ruins."

"I'll build another castle for you," he returned with a queer, sad smile, as though he sympathised with my dilemma.

"But not to-night," I urged, as I arose to go; "you must wait until you are stronger; you have been talking too much already for one so ill, and I must say good night."

It was several days later, and the youthful philosopher was making good progress on the road to recovery, when another young officer, very similar in appearance to our patient, drove up to the door of the hospital in a motor car. He was attended by two senior officers of

distinguished appearance and very military bearing, and who showed considerable deference towards their young companion.

Apparently they had come from the front and, as the colonel showed them about the various wards, took the keenest interest in the patients. At last they came to the young Welshman's room. As they entered he turned to look at them, and, dropping his arms, suddenly lay at "attention" in bed.

"Llewellyn, by Jove!" exclaimed the youngest of the trio, as he stepped forward and shook our patient warmly by the hand. "I had no idea you were here. How are you?"

"Much better, thank you, your Royal Highness," said Llewellyn, with his ready smile, "and greatly honoured by your visit, sir."

"I hope it is nothing serious," said the Prince of Wales kindly—for it was he—"you are looking quite bright!"

"It isn't *very* serious, I believe, sir—a touch of pleurisy, that's all. But the doctors insist on sending me home on account of it. That is my chief grievance."

The young Prince smiled understandingly. It was not so long since he too had unwillingly

been detained at home by illness. His blue eyes lit up with a quick sympathy as he remarked:

"I hadn't expected to find an old class-mate here; I hope you will soon be quite well again and able to return to France."

"I shall do my best to get well soon," Llewellyn answered thoughtfully; "but the doctors seem to consider my constitution too delicate for trench life, sir. I have the consolation, though, of knowing that our college is well represented at the front, for of the seventy-five students at Magdalen only five are home, and three of those were physically unfit."

"Isn't that a splendid record!" cried the Prince with enthusiasm. "It makes one feel proud of one's college."

They chatted on various topics for a few moments longer, and then as his Royal Highness turned to go he exclaimed:

"This is a wonderful hospital; a great credit to Canada! I must write father and tell him about it. I consider it one of the finest in France. I am sure you will do well here.

Good-bye, dear chap, and the best of good luck to you!"

The kindly and earnest good wishes of his Royal young friend touched Llewellyn deeply, and there was a suspicious trace of moisture in his eyes as he returned:

"Good-bye, sir, and many, many thanks for your kindness in coming to see me."

CHAPTER XVII

THE senior major bought a motor car. It was his supreme extravagance. If there were others who frittered away their substance in riotous living, at least the major could not be accused of such frivolity. He had none of the petty vices which eat like a wicked moth into the fabric of one's income. Any vice that got at his income bit it off in large chunks and bolted it before you could say "Jack Robinson." The motor car was the greatest of these. There may be some who do not consider a motor car a vice. The only answer I can give them is that they never saw the major's car. When he first unearthed its skeletal remains in the hospital garage, it bore a remote resemblance to a vehicle. It had part of an engine, four tireless wheels, and places which were meant for seats. A vision of its possibilities immediately arose before his mind's eye, and he could see it, rehabilitated and carefully fed,

growing into a "thing of beauty and a joy forever."

Some of the officers argued it was German, because no such thing could have been made by *human* beings. Others maintained it had been left on the hospital grounds centuries before and the garage had grown up around it. The maker, out of modesty, had omitted to inscribe his name, but it had a number whose hieroglyphics antedated "Bill Stump's Mark." The original owner sacrificed it, from a spirit of patriotism, no doubt, for the paltry sum of three hundred dollars, and in the course of time, with the trifling expenditure of three hundred and fifty more, two mechanics succeeded in getting it started.

That was a memorable day when, with a noise like an asthmatic steam-roller, it came ambling out of the hospital yard, peered around the corner of the fence, and struck off down the road at a clip of three good English miles an hour.

We rushed to the door to see it, and when the smoke of the exhaust cleared a little, there sat the major ensconced in the front seat. There was a beatific smile about his mouth and

a gleam of pride in his eye—the pride of possession. He wasn't quite sure what it was he possessed, but it was something which moved, something instinct with life.

"Sounds a bit noisy yet," he murmured confidentially to himself, "but it will loosen up when it gets running a while."

What prophetic sagacity there was in this remark! It *did* loosen up, and to such good purpose that several parts fell off upon the road. Little by little it got going, and in less than a month you might have heard it almost any bright afternoon, groaning in the garage preparatory to sallying forth upon its quest.

But about this time another event of such importance occurred that the major's car was thrust into the background. We had in our hospital a venerable old sergeant of peripatetic propensities, who had two claims to recognition: first, that he was, and is, the oldest soldier in the Canadian force in France; and secondly—but this was never proved—that he could "lick," according to his own testimony, any man within fifteen years of his age in that part of the world.

Sergeant Plantsfield, our postman and gen-

eral messenger, travelled into Boulogne and back from once to thrice daily—in other words, inside the year he accomplished a motor trip of sufficient length to encompass the earth. His stock of rumours was inexhaustible, for he developed and launched upon an unappreciative world at least one new tale daily.

Now if there is one thing a soldier loves more than another it's a "rumour"; and the more glaringly absurd, the more readily he will listen to it. So when the worthy old sergeant burst into the hospital with excited eyes, flushed cheeks and cap all awry after his latest trip from Boulogne, the boys crowded round to hear the news.

"They're here! By gosh! They're here at last!" he shouted, as he deposited his overflowing mail bag in the hall and looked triumphantly from one to another of his listeners.

"Who's here," demanded Barker, "the Germans?"

"Germans be blowed!" declared the sergeant with scornful emphasis. "They won't never be here!"

"Put a little pep in it, dad!" said Huxford. "Wot is it?"

The sergeant waited a full minute to give impress to his announcement, and then in a tense whisper ejaculated: "The rest of the Canadians are in France—the whole division's at the front!"

There was a dead silence for a moment, and then a wild cheer went up that shook the hall until the windows rattled.

"Ye ain't stuffin' us again?" Wilson queried anxiously, when the noise had died away. "Ye done it so often afore."

Plantsfield looked at him with withering contempt. That his word—the word of the chief "rumourist" of the unit—should be doubted was almost too much for human endurance.

"I'll stuff you, ye young cub, if ye dare to doubt a man old enough to be yer grandfather," he returned scathingly; and then turning to the others he continued: "I seen the Mechanical Transport near Boulogne and was talkin' to them."

"Oh, I'll bet you wos talkin', all right," Wilson came back vindictively, "if ye got within fifty yards uv 'em."

Plantsfield's garrulity was proverbial. He had been known to buttonhole generals and

draw them to one side to whisper a choice bit of scandal in their unwilling ears—his age excusing him from reprimand.

He looked wrathfully at Wilson, but that wily youth kept his rosy cheeks carefully out of arm-shot. Turning back to his more respectful auditors, and for the nonce ignoring the disrespectful one, he pursued:

"The Supply Column on their way to the front saw a German aeroplane over them, forgot discipline in their excitement, jumped down off their waggons and blazed away at it with their rifles."

"Without orders, I'll bet?" exclaimed Jogman, slapping his knee.

"Of course," grinned Plantsfield.

Honk had been standing with his mouth open, listening intently and taking in every word orally. He opened it a shade wider as Jogman finished speaking, and was about to make an observation, when Huxford, who was somewhat of a mimic, took the words out of his mouth:

"Just like them blawsted Canydians—'avin' their poke at th' bleedin' Hun. W'y cawn't

they wyte fer h'orders like h'everybody h'else—wyte until 'e gits aw'y?"

Honk's indignant protest was drowned in the general clamour which followed this sally, but his eyes—individually—said wonders.

At the outset discipline was a sore point with the Canadians. Like the peoples of all free-born countries, it took a long time to suppress the desire for individual initiative and an innate independence resented authority. But as the war progressed, Tommy and his seniors came to realise the absolute necessity for discipline, and bowed with what grace they might before its yoke. Perhaps what reconciled them most was the acquired knowledge that it pervaded all ranks from the generals down. They soon saw that the chain of responsibility must have no missing link.

In the early days of the war, however, on Salisbury Plains in the rain and mud, discipline was almost an impossibility, and officers seeking to inculcate this quality in their men had many strange experiences.

A Tommy was doing "sentry go" one evening in front of his battalion lines when an officer approached to speak to him. Tommy kept

his rifle firmly on his shoulder, at the "slope," and made no attempt to come to attention or salute. The officer, wishing to see if he understood his duty, demanded:

"What are you doing here?"

"Just walkin' up an' down," Tommy replied nonchalantly, forgetting, or at least omitting that important suffix: *"sir."*

"Just walking up and down," the officer reiterated, with annoyance. "What do you suppose you're walking up and down for?"

"To see that none of them guys comes in soused an' disorderly, I s'pose," he replied, but without any apparent interest in his occupation.

"Don't you know who I am?" the officer demanded testily, exasperated beyond endurance by such slackness.

"No," Tommy answered shortly. The absence of the "sir" was striking, and the tone implied further that he didn't care.

"I'm the commanding officer of your battalion!" Each word dropped like an icicle from the official lips.

"Holy—Jumpin'—Judas!" Tommy exclaimed, doing the "present arms" in three

distinct movements—one to each word; "court-martial fer me!"

It was too much for the gravity of the most hardened disciplinarian. The colonel turned and fled from the spot until he was far enough away that the God of Discipline might not be incensed at his shouts of laughter.

Tommy escaped the court-martial, but he wondered all evening what a sentry really was supposed to do.

It was almost a month after Plantsfield's momentous announcement before the Canadians commenced arriving at our hospital. They came in twos and threes, scattered amongst large numbers of other British troops, but they were mostly cases of illness or slight wounds—and we had little opportunity for comparing the stoicism of our own boys with that of the English, Irish and Scotch who arrived in droves. What would our lads be like when they too came back broken and torn? Would they be as patient and brave as the other British Tommies? Could they measure up to the standard of heroism set by these men of the Bull Dog breed? We waited, we watched and we wondered.

There was only desultory fighting during the month of March, and most of the wounds were from "snipers" or shrapnel.

The first seriously wounded Canadian to reach the hospital was an artillery officer, from Alberta. A small German shell had dropped into his dug-out and exploded so close to him that it was a miracle he escaped at all. When he arrived with his head completely swathed in bandages, and fifty or more wounds about his body, he looked more like an Egyptian mummy than a man. His mouth and the tip of his nose were the only parts of his body exposed to view, and they were burned and swollen to such an extent that, apart from their position, they conveyed no impression of their true identity. It was somewhat gruesome to hear a deep bass voice, without the slightest tremour, emerge from this mass of bandages. It was as if the dead had suddenly come to life.

"Would you be kind enough to put a cigarette in my mouth, sir?" he asked.

One is tempted to believe that after this war the eternal question will no longer be "Woman," but "Cigarette."

"Do you think you can smoke?" I asked him doubtfully.

Something remotely resembling a laugh came from the bandaged head, but there was not the slightest visible sign of mirth.

"I can manage it fairly well," he returned confidently; "my right arm has only a few wounds."

Only a few wounds! And he could lie there and speak calmly of them! He might have been excused for hysterics. The English officers in the other beds smiled appreciatively:

"He's a brick!" I heard one murmur.

The nursing sister, a keen, young woman of ability, looked across the bed at me with a slight smile of pride. She made no remark but as she leaned over her patient to unwind his bandages, a flush of pleasure at his heroism dyed her cheeks. We would have no cause to be ashamed of our own boys. As we stood beside the bed of that gallant chap, the epitome of all that was best and bravest from home, a lump arose in our throats and choked back speech.

With the aid of cocaine, I removed about a dozen small pieces of shell from his chest and

arms. His face was mottled with myriads of splinters of stone, and his right eye was practically gone. The hair had been completely burned off his head and in the centre of the scalp a piece of nickel, about the size of a penny and as thin as a wafer, had been driven. One large piece of shell had buried itself in the right leg; half a dozen more smaller scraps were in the left; his wrist watch had been smashed to atoms and the main spring was embedded in the flesh.

"I can't see yet," he explained, "so please watch where I lay my cigarette. I suppose my eyes will come around in time?"

How much would we have given to have been able to assure him of such a possibility! I had grave doubts, but answered as encouragingly as I dared. Reggy came in later to examine the eye and shook his head over it despondently.

"There's a chance for the left eye," he remarked to me, as we passed out into the hall, "but the right eye will have to be removed as soon as he is able to stand the operation."

(Apart from this loss, in the course of time, he recovered perfectly.)

We went into the room of a young officer from British Columbia, who had also just reached the hospital. He was a tall, handsome, fair-haired youth. He rose to his feet, trembling violently, as we entered. He was still dressed and after we had passed the customary greetings I enquired:

"Have you been wounded?"

"No," he replied with a smile, although his lip quivered as he spoke. "I wish I had been. It's rotten luck to get put out of business like this. I got in the way of a 'Jack Johnson'; it played me a scurvy trick—shell-shock, they tell me, that's all."

It might be all, but it surely was enough. There is nothing more pitiable than the sight of a strong, active young man, trembling continuously like an aspen leaf. Shell-shock, that strange, intangible condition which leaves its victims nervous wrecks for months or years, was uncommon in the early days of the war, but with the advent of thousands of guns is much more common now.

We chatted with him for a little while, and then continued our pilgrimage to the larger wards. Nursing Sister Medoc, a tall graceful

girl, a typical trained nurse, met us at the door.

"Here's a strange case, Major," she remarked, as she pointed to one of the new arrivals who had just been placed in bed. "He is quite insane and thinks he is still in the trenches, but he refuses to speak."

"He must be insane if he won't speak to you, Sister," Reggy suggested facetiously.

"That will be quite enough from you, young man," she returned with calm severity.

Sister Medoc preceded us into the ward, and Reggy whispered confidentially in my ear:

"Do you know, you can't 'jolly' our trained nurses—they're too clever. Sometimes I think they're scarcely human."

"You're quite right, Reggy," I returned consolingly, "too many are divine."

Reggy looked as if he would have liked to argue the point, but by this time we had reached the bedside of our patient. I addressed a few words to him, but he made no response and returned my look with a fixed and discomfiting stare. I wondered how, if he refused to talk, the nurse could tell he believed himself still in the trenches.

The riddle was shortly solved. Turning on his side and leaning on one elbow, he grasped the bar at the head of the bed and cautiously drew himself up until he could look over the "parapet." He shaded his eyes with one hand and gazed fearfully for a moment or two into the mists of "No Man's Land." Then quickly raising his elbow in an attitude of self-defence, he shrank back, listening intently to some sound we could not hear, and suddenly, with a low cry of alarm, dived beneath the sheets (into the trench) as the imaginary shell went screaming over his head.

As soon as it had passed he was up at the "parapet" again, straining his eyes and ears once more. His nostrils dilated tremulously as his breath came in quick short gasps. His upper lip curled in anger, and in that grim moment of waiting for the German charge, his teeth snapped firmly together and every muscle of his body was tense.

By the strained look in his eyes we knew the enemy was almost upon him—Reggy and I in the forefront. With a wild cry of hate and fury he sprang at us, lunging forward desperately with his bayonet. Reggy backed pre-

cipitately against me, but before he had time to speak our assailant, with a shiver of horror, had retreated into his "dug-out."

"Thank the Lord that was only an imaginary bayonet!" Reggy gasped; "I could hear my finish ringing the door bell."

"If we had been real Germans, Reggy," I returned with conviction, "we'd be running yet!"

"Do you think he'll recover?" Reggy asked.

"Yes. The attack is so violent and sudden; I think he has every chance. We'll send him to England to-morrow."

Another month passed. It was the night of the twenty-second of April when this startling message reached the hospital:

"Empty every possible bed. Ship all patients to England. Draw hospital marquees, beds, blankets and paliasses, and have your accommodation for patients doubled in twenty-four hours."

Something unlooked for had happened. We worked like slaves. The hospital grounds soon

looked like a miniature tented city. In half the time allotted us we were able to report that we were ready for six hundred wounded.

A despatch rider, covered with mud, whirled up to the door on his motorcycle. A little crowd gathered round him.

"Anything new?" we asked him excitedly.

"The Canadians are in one of the most frightful battles of the war," he replied. "The wounded will be coming in to-night."

And this was the day for which we had been waiting! This was the day for which we had crossed the sea! It was as if an iron hand had suddenly gripped the heart and held it as in a vise. We asked for further news, but he knew nothing more, and with anxious and impatient minds all we could do was—wait.

CHAPTER XVIII

As the sun hid its face on that tragic evening of the twenty-second of April, 1915, the Turcos and Canadians, peering over their parapets, were astonished to see a heavy yellowish mist rolling slowly and ominously from the German trenches. In the light breeze of sundown it floated lazily toward them, clinging close to the earth. Although the Turcos thought it a peculiar fog, they did not realise its true significance until it rolled into their trenches and enveloped them in its blinding fumes, stinging their eyes, choking their lungs and making them deathly ill. They could neither see nor breathe and those who could not get away fell in heaps where they were, gasping for air, blue in the face, dying in the most frightful agony.

Germany, discarding the last tattered remnant of her mantle of honour, had plunged brazenly into a hideous crime—poison-gas had been used for the first time in the history of war!

Coughing, sneezing, vomiting; with every breath cutting like a knife, crying tears of blood, the unfortunate Turcos who had not already fallen, fled from the accursed spot. The horses too, choking and startled, whinneying with fear, stampeded with their waggons or gun limbers in a mad endeavour to escape the horror of the poisoned air. A storm of shrapnel, high explosive and machine-gun bullets followed the flying masses and tore them to pieces as they ran.

For four miles the Allied trenches were left unprotected, and a quarter million Germans who had been awaiting this opportune moment, started to pour through the broad gap on their drive for Calais.

A brigade of Canadian artillery in Poperinghe received a hurried message that evening to move forward, take up a position on the road near Ypres and wait for further orders. They had but a faint notion of the great trial through which they were to pass.

When they arrived at the point designated it was almost dark and the noise of the German bombardment was terrific. Presently along

the road from Ypres came crowds of fleeing civilians. Feeble old men tottering along, tearful women carrying their babes or dragging other little ones by the hand, invalids in broken down waggons or wheel-barrows, wounded civilians hastily bandaged and supported by their despairing friends hurried by in ever-increasing numbers. Some had little bundles under their arms, some with packs upon their backs—bedding, household goods or clothes, hastily snatched from their shattered homes. With white terror-stricken faces, wringing their hands, moaning or crying, they ran or staggered by in thousands. Their homes destroyed, their friends scattered or killed, with death behind and starvation before, they ran, and the greedy shells, as if incensed at being robbed of their prey, came screaming after them.

To add to the confusion and horror of the evening, the Turcos, wild-eyed and capless, having thrown away their guns and all encumbrances, came running in stark terror across the fields shouting that the Germans had broken through and would be upon them any moment. They cried to the artillery to escape while they yet had a chance—that all was lost!

It required more heroism to stand before that onrush of terrorised humanity than to face death a dozen times over. To the Canadian artillery these were the most tragic and trying hours of their lives, but with stolid and grim determination they stood through it, waiting impatiently for the order to move forward.

All through the night the homeless, despairful creatures from St. Julien, Vlamertinge, Ypres and the villages round about streamed by in a heartrending, bemoaning multitude. Sometimes in agonised fear they broke through the ranks of the soldiers, stumbling onward toward Poperinghe.

The shriek of shells and the thunder of the guns continued hour after hour, while on high the vivid glare of bursting shrapnel cast a weird unearthly glow over the land. Between the blasts of artillery, from time to time on the wings of the wind, human cries blending in a gruesome murmur added to the horror of the night.

Through it all those men of iron stood by their guns waiting for the word of command. At 3.00 a.m. it came. A murmur of thankfulness that at last they were to do something went

up, and in a twinkling they were galloping eagerly forward toward their objective.

They chose the most advanced position in the line of guns, close to the Yser, and soon were in their places ready for the fight. Shells fell about them in thousands, but the men happy to be in the thick of the battle turned to their guns with a will and worked like mad.

The dawn broke, but there was no cessation of the fight. The guns became hot, and screeched complainingly as each shell tore through the swollen muzzle, but still there was no reprieve or rest, and all day long they belched forth smoke and death over the Yser's bank.

When the Germans commenced to pour through the gap which their treacherous gas had made, they overlooked one important obstacle. On their left were the men who had lived through four months of misery in the rain and mud of Salisbury Plains, each day laying up a bigger score against the *Bosches* for settlement.

With this unhappy memory, it was not likely that the First Canadians were to be ousted

from their trenches or killed by gas alone without a struggle for revenge. For some reason only their left wing had received an extreme dose of the gas. Many fell and died, but those who remained stuffed handkerchiefs into their mouths, covered their noses and held on like grim death for the great attack they knew was coming. They had not long to wait. Most of them had never seen the enemy before, and the sight of thousands of Germans marching forward in dense masses was to Tommy a distinct and unlooked for pleasure. But on they came in a multitude so great that it looked as if no guns on earth could mow them down.

In spite of the sight of these great numbers, it was with the utmost difficulty that the officers could restrain their men from rushing out at the enemy with the bayonet. Tommy argued: "Between Salisbury Plains and Wipers we've been stuck in the mud for six months, never so much as seeing the nose of a German, and now here they come, just asking to be killed and you won't let us get out at them!" The mere fact of being outnumbered twenty times over didn't seem sufficient excuse to disappointed Tommy for remaining under cover.

Myriads of self-satisfied *Bosches* came marching past, as though the world were theirs. They were due for a rude awakening. They had not progressed far when the extreme violence of the counter attack caused them to pause in irresolute wonder. Who were these bold, desperate men who dared remain in the trenches when half an army had passed? No army in its senses would remain with unprotected flank. There must be tremendous reinforcements at their back—so reasoned the Germans. To stay with one wing "in the air" seemed too much madness even for the "untrained" Canadians.

But one thing was clear to the Teuton mind; whoever they were, they were a decided menace to their advance and must be annihilated or forced back at all costs before the German Army could progress. But what a lot of annihilating they seemed to take!

The third brigade swung across the enemy's flank and poured such a withering fire into the *Bosches* that they were sore pressed, with all their horde, to hold their own. Men and guns were fighting back to back, grimly,

determinedly, unflinchingly and with invincible valour.

The enemy artillery now had command of the main road to Ypres, and of many of the lesser roads, and was keeping up a hellish fire on all to prevent reinforcements or supplies from reaching the Canadians.

All that night our plucky men fought them off, driving them back through the woods. They retook four captured guns. All the next day, thousands without food or water fought side by side with unconquerable spirit. In impossible positions, raked by enemy shell fire, without chance to eat or sleep, they held on and tore at the Germans like angry wolves, fighting with such unheard of ferocity that their opponents were absolutely staggered.

If a seemingly hopeless message came from headquarters to a battalion: "Can you hold on a few hours longer?", back would come the answer piping hot: "We can!"

Again and again the doubting question came to the trenches: "Can you still hold on?", and again and again returned the same enheartening reply: "We can and *will* hold on!"

Then an unheard of thing occurred—neglect

of an order. The message from headquarters, couched in generous words, read: "You have done all that human power can do. Your position is untenable. You must retreat!"

A flush of disdainful anger swept over the officer's face as he read this message, and he replied in three words: "Retreat be damned!"

The Canadians had not learned the meaning of the word "retreat." It had been left out of their martial vocabulary—some one was responsible for this omission. The Germans tried to teach them its meaning with gas, with bayonet and with shell; but thick-headed Tommy and his officers always misunderstood it for "hold" or "advance." It took four days of starvation and four sleepless, awful nights to make the most intelligent amongst them understand the word, and even then it was a scant concession to the *Bosche.*

Little bands of men, the remnants of dauntless battalions, holding isolated, advanced points, were commanded to fall back in order to straighten out the line. But the brave fellows who had so gallantly defended their posts, were loath to give them up. Unnerved, weak and exhausted, they still wanted to remain, and

when their officers insisted on their leaving, some actually sat down in the trench and wept bitter tears of humiliation and chagrin.

During these four fateful days British and French reinforcements had been rushed up to fill the gap, and further German progress was impossible. Harassed from the flank, beaten back from the front, decimated and discouraged, the Germans had suffered a disastrous and momentous defeat—for to them Calais, their greatest hope, was irretrievably lost.

During the great battle the Field Ambulance in which Jack Wellcombe was stationed was working night and day at fever pitch. Time and again the German guns sought out their quarters and big shells levelled to earth the houses round about; but, as if the hand of Providence were watching them, the little field hospital escaped with its patients each time, just before the buildings were wrecked.

Five times during the three days this fortunate move was accomplished not a moment too soon, but still they stuck doggedly to the village, as close as possible to the guns. Sleep was out of the question. Even if the noise

and imminent danger might have been ignored, the streams of wounded coming in had to receive attention, and during those frightful days no man flinched before his precarious and arduous duty.

In the seventeen consecutive days and nights of the artillery battle there was never a full minute's break in the bombardment from either side.

On the fourth day, during the lull in the infantry fighting, the door of the field ambulance was suddenly darkened by the figure of a man. He staggered in. His eyes were bloodshot. His clothes were torn and covered with mud, his chin had not been shaved for days and his appearance betokened utter weariness and exhaustion.

Jack Wellcombe met him at the door and, in spite of his unkempt and wild appearance, recognised him at once as the Commanding Officer of a Canadian battalion.

"Good morning, sir," he said in his usual cheery manner.

The colonel looked toward him with glazed, unseeing eyes and without a sign of recognition.

"I want four coffins," he muttered, ignoring Jack's greeting.

"You want what, sir?" Jack exclaimed, with a puzzled look.

"Four coffins," he repeated with mechanical firmness and in a tone of command, "and I want them at once!"

"Come in, sir, and sit down," Jack urged. "You're unnerved from this wild fight and lack of sleep. You need a rest—not a coffin."

"I know what I want," he repeated with calm insistence, "and it's four coffins—to bury four of my officers."

Jack thought the man's reason had gone as a result of the terrific strain, but decided to humour him.

"Come over to my billet with me and get a shave, a wash and a good glass of grog, and then when you're feeling better we'll go out together and get what you want, and I'll go back to the lines with you."

The colonel passed his hand across his forehead as though he were trying without success to recollect something, and then without a word suffered Jack to take his arm and lead him away. When they arrived at the billet Jack

gave him a stiff glass of brandy and asked him to lie down while the water was being heated for his bath. Before it was ready he had fallen sound asleep and Jack did not disturb him for a couple of hours, when he was aroused with difficulty.

The batman meanwhile brushed the caked mud from his clothes, and by the time he had had a bath and a shave and a bite of lunch he had begun to look more like himself. He seemed greatly depressed and talked little; he was like a man walking in his sleep and still in the throes of a gruesome nightmare.

As they started off up the street of the village Jack remarked: "You don't really want those coffins for which you asked me this morning, do you?"

The colonel looked uncomprehendingly at him. Without answering the question, he asked in return:

"Is there a florist's shop in the village?"

"Well, not exactly a 'florist's,'" Jack replied, "but there is a place at the far end of the street where we might get some flowers."

"Let us go there!"

He spoke no further word until they arrived

at the little house which Jack pointed out as a likely place. They entered the room and after some slight delay madame produced a vase filled with deep red roses. The colonel selected four of the largest, paid the woman and without a comment walked out with the roses in his hand.

"Get me a motor car," he said to Jack; "we have several miles to go."

The mechanical transport supplied them with a small car and they started on their strange mission. They pulled up a few miles back of the firing line and tramped silently across the fields, the colonel still clutching the roses, until they came to a spot where a number of Tommies were standing by four open graves which they had just dug. Beside the graves rested four shapeless bundles covered with blankets.

"Do you know the burial service?" the colonel asked Jack suddenly.

"I'm afraid I don't remember it well enough to repeat it," Jack replied.

"It doesn't matter much," he went on thoughtfully, "I can say it myself."

The men got ready with their ropes to lower

the packages, one by one, into their respective resting places. It was all that was left of four gallant officers of a gallant battalion. The colonel repeated the burial service from memory, word for word:

"Ashes to ashes—dust to dust . . ."

But before the earth closed over them he stood at the foot of each grave, silent as the grave itself, and dropping a rose tenderly upon each stood at attention, his right hand at the "salute." As the earth fell dully upon the blankets he turned away with tears in his eyes and said simply:

"Poor brave chaps! I loved them all! God keep them. They did their duty!"

It was ten o'clock at night as Reggy and I, crossing the tracks at the *Gare Maritime* in Boulogne, saw a battalion which had just disembarked from the cross-channel boat drawn up on the quay, ready to entrain for the front.

We walked toward them in a spirit of idle curiosity—for the sight was one to which we were well accustomed—when, under the dim light of a partly shaded street lamp, we noticed that they were from home. We ap-

proached a little group of officers who were chatting animatedly together, and among them found several whom we knew.

"What's the truth about this big show the Canadians are in at the front?" one cried. "There are all sorts of rumours in England. Some say eight hundred casualties; some say eight *thousand.*"

"I'm afraid eight thousand is nearer the mark," I replied hesitatingly, fearing to discourage them.

"Eight thousand!" he echoed; and then an eager cry went up from the little group:

"By Jove! Hope they'll hurry us on to the front!"

And I was afraid of discouraging them! How little I understood my own countrymen!

"All aboard!" came the call a moment later, and the enthusiastic Tommies eagerly clambered into the waiting coaches. As the train clank-clanked along the street and left us standing there alone in the darkness, back to our ears came the familiar but ribald strain of "Hail, hail, the gang's all here!"

No matter in what strange words it may find

vent, the care-free spirit of song is the true spirit of the army.

"You can't discourage men like that," said Reggy with a smile half amusement and half unconscious pride.

And each occupied with his own thoughts we turned and walked silently down the quay.

THE END

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Bell, Frederick McKelvey
The first Canadians in France

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